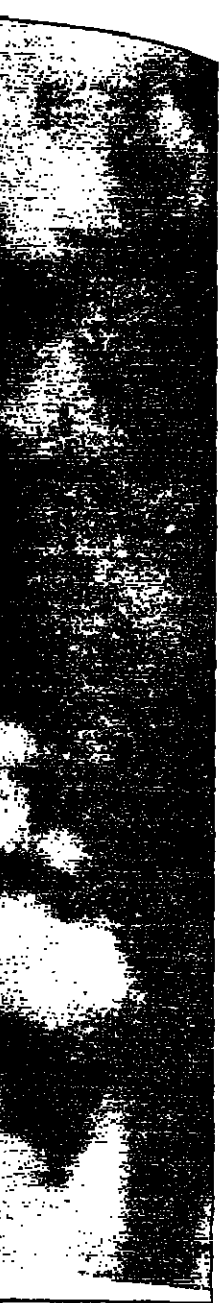


DEPENDENT
Friday 5 April 1999



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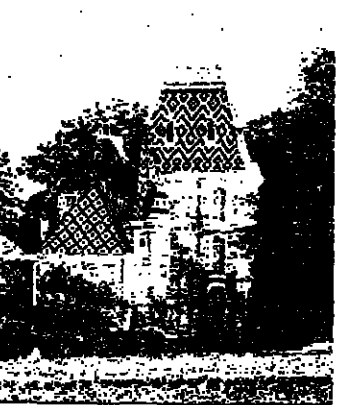
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THE GRAND NATIONAL: FULL COLOUR GUIDE PAGE 30

Murdoch's Man Utd bid blocked



THE GOVERNMENT dealt a huge blow to Rupert Murdoch's bid to take over British Sky Broadcasting when it blocked the takeover of Manchester United by British Sky Broadcasting.

BY PETER THAL LARSEN AND ANDREW GRICE

considered by the MMC, the merger would increase the market power which BSkyB already has as a provider of sports premium channels," Mr Byers said.

The MMC's 254-page report, compiled after an investigation lasting four and a half months, also appears to rule out the possibility of any broadcaster being allowed to own a football club in the future.

The decision sparked celebrations among the supporters' groups who have opposed the deal since it was announced last September. "The most remarkable thing is that a politician has at last stood up to Rupert Murdoch," said Michael Crick, a broadcaster and founder of the Shareholders United Against Murdoch group.

Both BSkyB and United expressed their disappointment at the decision, but insisted that it was not a catastrophe. "We're obviously very disappointed," said David Gill, Manchester United's finance director. "But we are confident in terms of our ability to retain our success."

A BSkyB spokesman said: "We cannot see what possible competition grounds could exist, because we were prepared to withdraw from the TV negotiations."

In the City, shares in Manchester United and other listed football clubs such as Aston Villa and Newcastle crashed as investors absorbed the report's implications.

In Serbia, too, the ordinary people feel the suffering and agony of war



A survivor inspecting the remains of her home in Aleksinac, south of Belgrade, after a Nato attack five days ago in which 24 civilians are thought to have died

NATO'S WAR is growing more brutal by the hour. I spent most of yesterday - the Orthodox Easter Good Friday - clambering through the rubble of pulverised Serb homes and broken water pipes and roof timbers and massive craters. At Cuprija, Nato jets have blasted away seven homes, two of them direct hits, during an attack on the local army barracks. In Kragujevac, the workers at the massive Zastava car plant who so stubbornly told me just over a week ago that they would sleep on the factory floor to protect their workplace - they even sent e-mails to Clinton, Albright and Solana to this effect - were rewarded with an attack by cruise missiles that smashed into the car works and wounded 120 of the men.



ROBERT FISK IN CUPRIJA

by the policemen, rescue workers and journalists walking over the wreckage. "Both my parents died just over there - where the bulldozer is moving the rubble," she said quietly. "I was staying in Nis for the night and this saved my life." Beside her was part of the torn casing of the Nato bomb that buried the couple in their cottage.

There is a lot of palpable anger in Aleksinac - a Russian resident shouted abuse when he heard me speak in English. But there was not a word of malice from Svetlana, no rhetorical condemnation of the Nato attacks. When I said how sorry I was for her family, she replied in English: "Thank you for coming to see our suffering."

Spyros Kyrtanous, the speaker of the Cypriot parliament, turned up at the bomb sites during the day on a hopeless mission to secure the release of the three American soldiers captured by Serb forces last week - in anticipation, no doubt, of obtaining US support for a Greek Cypriot solution to the island's partition. He was given a loud and angry account of Nato's sins from Serbian government officials - nothing about the appalling suffering of Kosovo's Albanian

civilians, of course - and never had a chance to hear the names of those who died in Aleksinac. Nato says the bomb that killed the people there may have suffered a "malfunction" which caused - that obscene phrase yet again - "collateral damage". The "damage" in this case includes Svetlana Jovanovic's parents, the Milodinovics and their daughter, Jovana Radoljic and his wife, Sofia, Grosdan Milivojevic and his wife, Dragica. Nor was it "collateral": one of the bombs landed square on the Jovanovic house. It was the same story - with mercifully no deaths - at Cuprija.

A farming town of 30,000 a hundred miles south of Belgrade, its local barracks was attacked early on Thursday in a raid that left a square mile of devastation through dozens of homes. The Yugoslav army garrison had abandoned the place 10 days ago - "we're not fools," a policeman said - but the civilians stayed on and waited for the inevitable. When the first of seven bombs fell, they ran to their basements as their houses collapsed on top of them.

I found one home that was simply blasted from its foundations and hurled across the road into a neighbour's field. The owner left crouching - miraculously untouched - in his basement. Another bomb had exploded in a lane opposite a school, breaking the local water mains and blasting down the walls of a bungalow.

True, there is a military barracks at Cuprija - at least two bombs had torn off the roof of the empty Tito-era monstrously half a mile away. And there is a military building 800m from the site of the Aleksinac slaughter. And yes, Nato believes - and Yugoslav sources confirm - that part of the Zastava car factory is used for weapons production. It is the fate of Yugoslav industry that, thanks to Tito, hundreds of its factories have dual production facilities. And the Kragujevac car plant management had pleaded with its workers to end their sit-in.

But Nato's refusal to show restraint when it knew the workers had stayed in the factory shows just how far it is now taking its war against Serbia.

On Thursday, military officers at the Pentagon announced the "human shield" of Belgrade's young people on the capital's largest road bridge would not prevent them attacking the structure. I couldn't help thinking amid the devastations yesterday that if Nato goes on widening its bombing campaign to include civilians - as it very clearly did in Pristina this week, despite its preposterous claim that the Serbs bombed themselves - then the final death toll at Aleksinac could soon be academic.

Perhaps there are those in Nato who will argue that after their ferocity towards the Kosovo Albanians, the Serbs deserve "a dose of their own medicine". It can always be said - in all truthfulness - Serb casualties are minimal compared with their victims in Kosovo. But if it stays its present course, Nato's offensive risks a massacre.

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Full reports, pages 2-4
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Lawrence Information Two Lawrence witnesses have emerged Home P8	Trade row Banana wars blight the Mongolian goatherds Foreign P16	Robbie Fowler ban Fowler faces six-match ban and £22,000 fine. Sport P27

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TODAY'S TELEVISION BACK PAGE

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WAR IN THE BALKANS

"If, in the future [a ground war] comes up, we'll discuss and debate it"

William Cohen,
US Defense Secretary

"The campaign in the air should be sufficient... If the circumstances change, we will consider that"

Javier Solana, of Nato

"Ultimately, a conflict is always decided on the ground"

Gen Klaus Naumann, of Nato's military committee

"I don't think it is a question of sitting down to do business with Milosevic at the end"

Tony Blair

"I repeat again, Russia will not get involved in Yugoslavia if the Americans do not push us"

President Boris Yeltsin

"He [Milosevic] hopes we will accept as permanent the results of his ethnic cleansing. We will not"

President Bill Clinton

Nato 'sorry' for getting facts wrong

THE DAMAGE

By John Davison

ONE OF three bombs aimed at the main telephone exchange in Pristina hit a residential area, Nato admitted yesterday. It had previously denied that its bombers were responsible for damage in the city centre.

Air Commodore David Wilby, the alliance military spokesman, said that the exchange was a "critical target" because it was being used for communications between Serbian forces in Kosovo and Belgrade. Nato regretted any loss of civilian life, he said.

"One bomb appeared to be deflected off the target at the final stages. Close inspection of imagery indicates that it landed some 200 to 300m away in what seems to be a small residential area," he said.

Extensive damage to the Kosovo capital was revealed to reporters on Wednesday night, on a visit organised by the Serb authorities. In a silent and deserted city centre they saw that - as well as the exchange - the post office, the largest bank and a row of civilian homes had been hit. At least 10 civilians

were said to have been killed in attacks the previous night.

Serb minders and local people interviewed said that all the wreckage had been caused by alliance bombs, but this was flatly denied by Nato at the time. Air Commodore Wilby suggested that some of the damage had been caused by Serb forces for propaganda purposes.

"I can absolutely assure you that while Nato has attacked military targets around Pristina, and one very carefully targeted headquarters... Nato has certainly not caused the reported widespread and random damage which we believe has been orchestrated by Serbian forces," he said on Thursday.

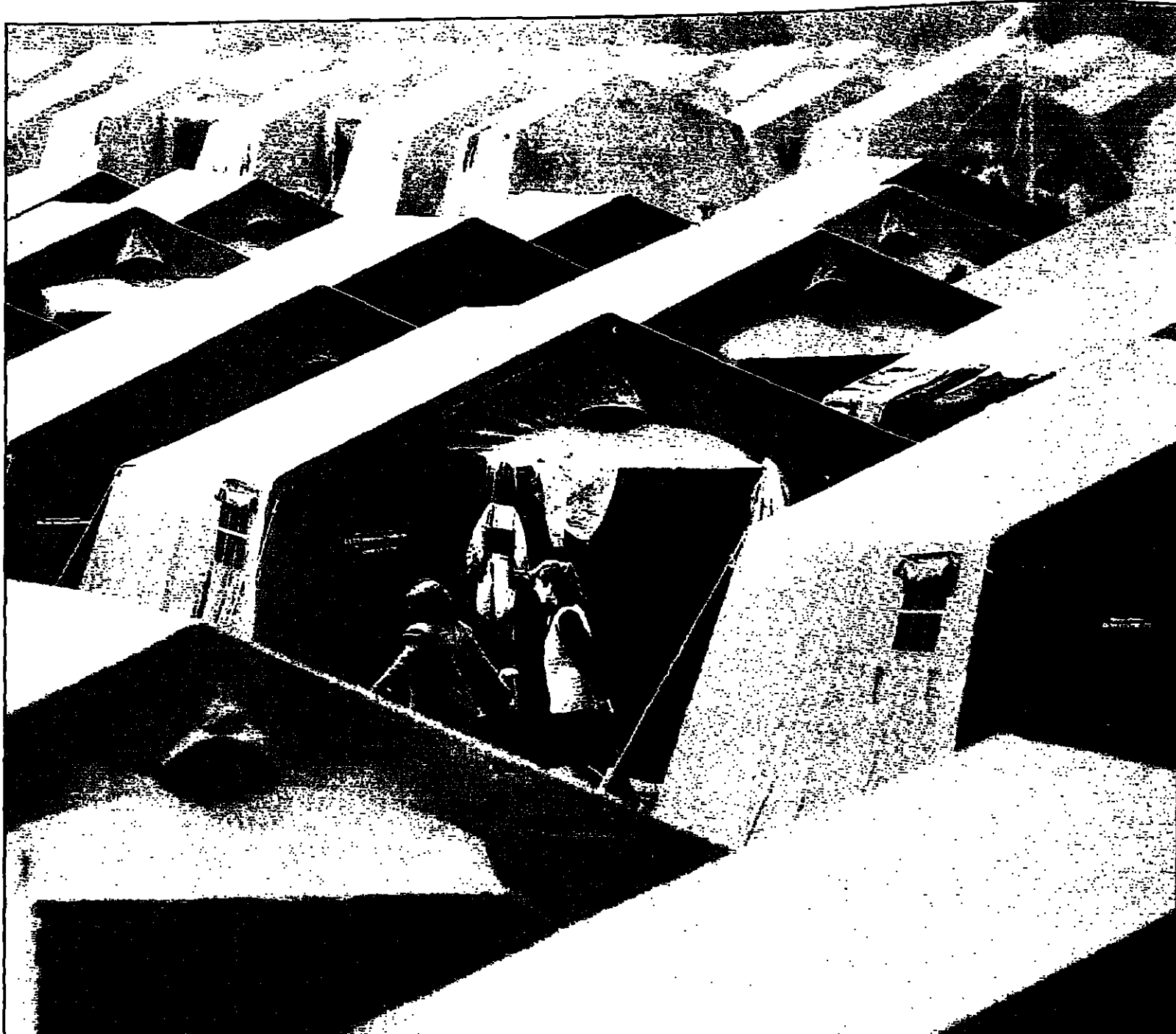
Yesterday's admission came as Serbian state television reported that a Nato air attack on a car factory in the central Serbian town of Kragujevac on Thursday night had left 124 people injured, 24 of them seriously. It has been claimed that the plant was also used for arms and ammunition production.

For 12 days of the campaign Nato spokesmen stated with

pride that there had been virtually no civilian casualties, using this as an indication of the accuracy of its attacks. If any "collateral damage" had been caused, Slobodan Milosevic's propaganda machine would have made the most of it, they said. Then on Tuesday, Air Commodore Wilby had to apologise for a bomb going astray during a raid on Aleksinac the previous night, killing five civilians and wounding another.

At yesterday's Nato briefing, Air Commodore Wilby said that after some success on Thursday morning, "the weather has turned against us", affecting operations. He also said that Serb forces appeared to be building up in the north of Kosovo.

In London, General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the Defence Staff, said that 10 RAF Harriers had hit two groups of vehicles on Thursday. The first attack was on a military vehicle compound in southern Kosovo and the second was against military trucks in the west. Both were successful, he said.



Tents providing shelter at Cavaje, Albania for thousands of Kosovo refugees cared for by the Italian group Rainbow Filippo Moneforti/AF

Charity accuses UN of failing refugees

AID EFFORT

By Richard Lloyd Parry in Skopje

THE AID organisation Medecins Sans Frontieres accused the UN High Commissioner for Refugees yesterday of failing in its duty towards refugees from Kosovo, as criticism grows of the UN's role in the Balkans disaster.

It accused the Commissioner of failing to monitor the numbers and whereabouts of displaced Kosovars, and of allowing the Macedonian government to deport them against their will, splitting families.

"Many refugees are not registered," the organisation said. "Without registration, refugees are not individuals and have no

rights and families cannot be reunited... families were and still are being separated and transported to camps and other countries, sometimes without consent."

"MSF is extremely concerned that the minimum standards for the assistance and protection of refugees have been ignored," their statement said.

Aid workers and Nato soldiers on the ground privately have been making similar complaints for days, since the exodus began to choke the borders.

They say the UNHCR is disorganised and has left the burden of caring for the refugees

to the Macedonians, whose Slav-dominated government wants only to get rid of them, and to Nato, which is a military, not a humanitarian organisation.

"Nato is neither responsible nor able to co-ordinate humanitarian relief activities for refugees - nor should it be."

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, admitted yesterday that it will be days before order is restored in Macedonian refugee camps. She said she has no

means of helping those Albanians who were forcibly returned to Kosovo by the Serbs when Belgrade closed the border.

"I cannot do anything right now because I can't go into Kosovo without security being assured," she said.

She had spent a day visiting refugee camps and talking to political leaders in the Macedonian capital, Skopje.

"I am helpless. At the same time I am extremely concerned about the situation over the bor-

der with Kosovo," she added. Between 120,000 and 130,000 refugees from Kosovo are still inside Macedonia, about half of them billeted with ethnic Albanian families in the predominantly Albanian western part of the republic.

Mrs Ogata conceded that "we have learnt many lessons", but said it would be "a matter of days" before the situation was under control.

"Criticism is being given freely by many people many times. I'd like Medecins Sans Frontieres to join us in putting this into practice," she said.

Plans to airlift refugees to foreign countries, including

Britain, appear to have been suspended. "The British Government's thinking, as well as that of myself, is that it is best to host refugees in the area neighbouring their own country," Mrs Ogata said.

The tension in Macedonia took a new and potentially damaging turn yesterday when the army confirmed a 27-year-old soldier was shot dead in a fire fight with unknown ambushers shooting from inside Kosovo.

At first there was speculation it may have been Serb forces. There was also speculation that the shooting may have been carried out by members of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

BRIEFING: DAY 17

- Nato air strikes continued against a wide range of targets around the clock.
- Ten Harrier GR7s engaged in missions over western Kosovo, four released weapons on targets.
- Nato said its planes carried out nearly 400 sorties in the 17th day of the conflict, had attacked a Yugoslav military convoy in Kosovo and that the "tempo and effectiveness" of its raids were increasing.
- UK troops in Macedonia are accommodating 22,000 to 25,000 refugees at Braza and 7,000 to 8,000 at Stankovic in Macedonia.
- Nato has made 39 flights delivering aid to Macedonia.
- Nato has delivered 600 tonnes of equipment to Albania.
- In northern Albania, 34 centres housing 22,000 refugees have been opened by the Albanian authorities.
- Nato has taken control of the Albania's main airport at Tirana.
- The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe reports that 14,000 refugees have crossed from Macedonia into Albania.
- The World Health Organisation has moved 14 emergency health kits into Montenegro.

BRITAIN TODAY



FORECAST

General situation: South-east England and East Angles will start dry and mild but it will be cloudy with a band of showery rain moving in. This will clear to sunny spells and isolated showers later this afternoon. Rain this morning in Wales, western and northern England will move away to leave a fresher but brighter afternoon with a few lighter showers. Any early rain will clear Scotland and Northern Ireland to leave it cool with sunny breaks and blustery showers, some of the showers prolonged in the north and west.

London, SE England, E Angles: Cloud will increase to bring showery rain but bright by evening. A moderate south-westerly wind. Max temp 14-17C (57-63F).

E England, Midlands, Cent S England, Channel Is: Rain will soon break out then it will be fresher this afternoon with sunny spells and isolated showers. A moderate south-west wind, becoming north-westerly. Max temp 12-15C (54-59F).

SW & NW England, Wales, Lake Dist, Isle of Man: Early rain will clear before it turns cool with sunny spells and a few sharp showers. A moderate south-west wind, becoming north-westerly. Max temp 10-13C (50-55F).

Cent W & SE England: Rain this morning then cooler and sunny spells and blustery showers. A moderate westerly wind. Max temp 11-14C (52-57F).

NE & SE Scotland, Edinburgh, Aberdeen: Any early rain will soon clear to leave it cool and blustery with sunny spells and the occasional shower, chiefly in the north. A fresh north-westerly wind. Max temp 9-12C (48-54F).

SW & NW Scotland, Glasgow, N & W Isles: Cold in the thirteenth wind. Sunshine and sharp showers. A fresh north-westerly wind. Max temp 9-12C (48-54F).

N Ireland: Cool and showery, some of the showers prolonged and heavy. A fresh north-westerly wind. Max temp 10-12C (50-54F).

Outlook: Cooler but the south will be dry with sunshine early tomorrow. Scotland and Northern Ireland will see rain and this will spread southwards. On Monday chilly north-westerly winds will bring sunshine and showers.

Travel: Cheltenham, closed due to roadworks. Inbound. Diversions in place. Until 1st June.

Co. Antrim: A1 Killybegs, Dunmurry, Roadworks, various lane restrictions. Until 1st August.

Derbyshire: A6 Between Derby Southern Bypass (A50) and Shirebrook Road roundabout. East of A50. Contraflow for work on new A50. Until 15th October.

AA Roadworks: Call 0333 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

Gloucestershire: A40 Lansdown Rd.

LIGHTING UP

	8.17pm	to	6.32am
Belfast	8.17pm	to	6.32am
Birmingham	7.56pm	to	6.20am
Bristol	7.56pm	to	6.20am
Glasgow	8.17pm	to	6.23am
Harwich	8.44pm	to	7.12.30
Manchester	7.46pm	to	6.15am
Newcastle	8.00pm	to	6.20am
Newcastle	8.00pm	to	6.14am

HIGH TIDES

	AM	HT	PM	HT
Aberdeen	1.23	9.5	2.09	9.4
Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
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Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
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Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3
Cardiff	1.27	3.2	8.26	3.3

AIR QUALITY

Today's readings

	NO _x	SO ₂
London	Good	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

SUN & MOON

Sun rises: 06.17
Sun sets: 19.48
Moon rises: 03.40
Moon sets: 12.45
New Moon: April 16th

WEATHERLINE

For the latest forecasts call 0891 5000 followed by the two digits for your area. Source: The Met. Office. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

RAIN OR SHINE...

THE AMERICAN Mid-west was swept by powerful storms yesterday, which destroyed homes and killed at least six people.

The Cincinnati area was particularly hard-hit. Entire neighbourhoods were destroyed as strong thunderstorms moved through the Ohio city. Roofs were torn off stores and the wind lifted a car from the ground and threw it against a wall.

Source: The Met. Office. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

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YESTERDAY

	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Winnipeg	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
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Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)
Great Malvern	Winnipeg	Great Malvern	20C (68F)

THE WORLD

Europe noon today

Key: 0-10°C 11-20°C 21-30°C 31-40°C 41-50°C 51-60°C 61-70°C 71-80°C 81-90°C 91-100°C 101-110°C 111-120°C 121-130°C 131-140°C 141-150°C 151-160°C 161-170°C 171-180°C 181-190°C 191-200°C 201-210°C 211-220°C 221-230°C 231-240°C 241-250°C 251-260°C 261-270°C 271-280°C 281-290°C 291-300°C 301-310°C 311-320°C 321-330°C 331-340°C 341-350°C 351-360°C 361-370°C 371-380°C 381-390°C 391-400°C 401-410°C 411-420°C 421-430°C 431-440°C 441-450°C 451-460°C 461-470°C 471-480°C 481-490°C 491-500°C 501-510°C 511-520°C 521-530°C 531-540°C 541-550°C 551-560°C 561-570°C 571-580°C 581-590°C 591-600°C 601-610°C 611-620°C 621-630°C 631-640°C 641-650°C 651-660°C 661-670°C 671-680°C 681-690°C 691-700°C 701-710°C 711-720°C 721-730°C 731-740°C 741-750°C 751-760°C 761-770°C 771-780°C 781-790°C 791-800°C 801-810°C 811-820°C 821-830°C 831-840°C 841-850°C 851-860°C 861-870°C 871-880°C 881-890°C 891-900°C 901-910°C 911-920°C 921-930°C 931-940°C 941-950°C 951-960°C 961-970°C 971-980°C 981-990°C 991-1000°C 1001-1010°C 1011-1020°C 1021-1030°C 1031-1040°C 1041-1050°C 1051-1060°C 1061-1070°C 1071-1080°C 1081-1090°C 1091-1100°C 1101-1110°C 1111-1120°C 1121-1130°C 1131-1140°C 1141-1150°C 1151-1160°C 1161-1170°C 1171-1180°C 1181-1190°C 1191-1200°C 1201-1210°C 1211-1220°C 1221-1230°C 1231-1240°C 1241-1250°C 1251-1260°C 1261-1270°C 1271-1280°C 1281-1290°C 1291-1300°C 1301-1310°C 1311-1320°C 1321-1330°C 1331-1340°C 1341-1350°C 1351-1360°C 1361-1370°C 1371-1380°C 1381-1390°C 1391-1400°C 1401-1410°C 1411-1420°C 1421-1430°C 1431-1440°C 1441-1450°C 1451-1460°C 1461-1470°C 1471-1480°C 1481-1490°C 1491-1500°C 1501-1510°C 1511-1520°C 1521-1530°C 1531-1540°C 1541-1550°C 1551-1560°C 1561-1570°C 1571-1580°C 1581-1590°C 1591-1600°C 1601-1610°C 1611-1620°C 1621-1630°C 1631-1640°C 1641-1650°C 1651-1660°C 1661-1670°C 1671-1680°C 1681-1690°C 1691-1700°C 1701-1710°C 1711-1720°C 1721-1730°C 1731-1740°C 1741-1750°C 1751-1760°C 1761-1770°C 1771-1780°C 1781-1790°C 1791-1800°C 1801-1810°C 1811-1820°C 1821-1830°C 1831-1840°C 1841-1850°C 1851-1860°C 1861-1870°C 1871-1880°C 1881-1890°C 1891-1900°C 1901-1910°C 1911-1920°C 1921-1930°C 1931-1940°C 1941-1950°C 1951-1960°C 1961-1970°C 1971-1980°C 1981-1990°C 1991-2000°C 2001-2010°C 2011-2020°C 2021-2030°C 2031-2040°C 2041-2050°C 2051-2060°C 2061-2070°C 2071-2080°C 2081-2090°C 2091-2100°C 2101-2110°C 2111-2120°C 2121-2130°C 2131-2140°C 2141-2150°C 2151-2160°C 2161-2170°C 2171-2180°C 2181-2190°C 2191-2200°C 2201-2210°C 2211-2220°C 2221-2230°C 2231-2240°C 2241-2250°C 2251-2260°C 2261-2270°C 2271-2280°C 2281-2290°C 2291-2300°C 2301-2310°C 2311-2320°C 2321-2330°C 2331-2340°C 2341-2350°C 2351-2360°C 2361-2370°C 2371-2380°C 2381-2390°C 2391-2400°C 2401-2410°C 2411-2420°C 2421-2430°C 2431-2440°C 2441-2450°C 2451-2460°C 2461-2470°C 2471-2480°C 2481-2490°C 2491-2500°C 2501-2510°C 2511-2520°C 2521-2530°C 2531-2540°C 2541-2550°C 2551-2560°C 2561-2570°C 2571-2580°C 2581-2590°C 2591-2600°C 2601-2610°C 2611-2620°C 2621-2630°C 2631-2640°C 2641-2650°C 2651-2660°C 2661-2670°C 2671-2680°C 2681-2690°C 2691-2700°C 2701-2710°C 2711-2720°C 2721-2730°C 2731-2740°C 2741-2750°C 2751-2760°C 2761-2770°C 2771-2780°C 2781-2790°C 2791-2800°C 2801-2810°C 2811-2820°C 2821-2830°C 2831-2840°C 2841-2850°C 2851-2860°C 2861-2870°C 2871-2880°C 2881-2890°C 2891-2900°C 2901-2910°C 2911-2920°C 2921-2930°C 2931-2940°C 2941-2950°C 2951-2960°C 2961-2970°C 2971-2980°C 2981-2990°C 2991-3000°C 3001-3010°C 3011-3020°C 3021-3030°C 3031-3040°C 3041-3050°C 3051-3060°C 3061-3070°C 3071-3080°C 3081-3090°C 3091-3100°C 3101-3110°C 3111-3120°C 3121-3130°C 3131-3140°C 3141-3150°C 3151-3160°C 3161-3170°C 3171-3180°C 3181-3190°C 3191-3200°C 3201-3210°C 3211-3220°C 3221-3230°C 3231-3240°C 3241-3250°C 3251-3260°C 3261-3270°C 3271-3280°C 3281-3290°C 3291-3300°C 3301-3310°C 3311-3320°C 3321-3330°C 3331-3340°C 3341-3350°C 3351-3360°C 3361-3370°C 3371-3380°C 3381-3390°C 3391-3400°C 3401-3410°C 3411-3420°C 3421-3430°C 3431-3440°C 3441-3450°C 3451-3460°C 3461-3470°C 3471-3480°C 3481-3490°C 3491-3500°C 3501-3510°C 3511-3520°C 3521-3530°C 3531-3540°C 3541-3550°C 3551-3560°C 3561-3570°C 3571-3580°C 3581-3590°C 3591-3600°C 3601-3610°C 3611-3620°C 3621-3630°C 3631-3640°C 3641-3650°C 3651-3660°C 3661-3670°C 3671-3680°C 3681-3690°C 3691-3700°C 3701-3710°C 3711-3720°C 3721-3730°C 3731-3740°C 3741-3750°C 3751-3760°C 3761-3770°C

Do not push us into war, warns Yeltsin

RUSSIAN THREAT

By PHIL REEVES in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN has warned Nato and its allies against forcing Russia into the deepening Yugoslav conflict, saying this could lead to the Third World War.

The president has repeatedly said he intends to stay out of the Balkans war, but he revised that stance yesterday by adding an important new proviso: Russia will not get embroiled - "unless pushed".

He said on television: "I told Nato, the Americans, the Germans, don't push us towards military action. Otherwise there will be a European war, for sure, and possibly world war, which must not be permitted."

In separate comments, he warned that if Nato went through with what he considers its aim "to seize Yugoslavia and make it their protectorate", there could be a stronger response from Moscow.

He did not specify what, but went on: "We can by no means give Yugoslavia away." He said a ground war would mean "big losses", as the Serbs are prepared to fight to "the last man".

The president's outburst amounts to a strategic decision to step up the barrage of angry words flying westwards over the Kremlin's battlements since the conflict began.

So far Mr Yeltsin and his premier, Yevgeny Primakov, have sought to tread a precarious line in this conflict. They have made clear that they intend to refrain from sending weapons



President Boris Yeltsin speaking in Moscow last night. He is under great domestic pressure to join the war. EPA

to Belgrade or joining the war militarily, knowing this would vastly complicate relations with the West.

But they have also maintained a noisy flow of complaints and diplomatic moves to appease a genuinely outraged public and - crucially - a dangerously exasperated and anti-western Russian military.

But they are under intense domestic pressure to do more. Almost every major political entity outside the enfeebled liberal democrats has called for Russia to arm the Serbs.

The now-emboldened Duma, parliament's Communist-dominated lower house, voted overwhelmingly to send weapons and military advisers. Mr Yeltsin is threatened with impeachment proceedings, although these face many hurdles. An investigation is underway into corruption within the Kremlin. And his restless, broken-down army is deeply humiliated by Nato's strike on old Slavic friends. He needs to get this right.

So far, Moscow has restricted its protests to considered manoeuvres. It has severed ties with Nato, dispatched a surveillance ship to the Adriatic, and sent 80 lorry-loads of humanitarian aid to Belgrade (only days after accepting EU and US food aid to Russia).

At the same time, Russia has tried to position itself as a mediator, knowing that whoever leads the world out of this deep-

ening crisis will emerge with a hero's garlands.

Not unreasonably, Moscow's hopes are pinned on suspicions that Nato has been drawn into an unwinnable conflict.

Although it remains likely that the Russian government will continue to resist being drawn militarily into Yugoslavia's deadly vortex, Mr Yeltsin clearly believes his task is getting daily more difficult.

Yesterday he embraced suggestions that Yugoslavia might join the Belarus-Russia union - another symbolic gesture because the alliance between Moscow and Minsk has been singularly fruitless. Even in these dark hours, Russia will not want to be seen to be locked in a three-way embrace with Belarus's dictatorial Alexander Lukashenko and Mr Milosevic.

Nato and the Kremlin refused to comment on the most thespian Russian gesture of the day, the reported re-targeting of Moscow's nuclear

Bear roars but it will not bite

ANALYSIS
By RUPERT CORNWELL

THE BEAR has roared. These days however, even rumblings from the Kremlin about a generalised European war and a possible Third World War over Kosovo cause little more than a momentary tremor on Western financial markets, and wonderings about who, if anyone, truly runs Russia.

Yesterday's threats from President Boris Yeltsin followed a familiar erratic pattern: a dramatic assertion - that Moscow had re-targeted its nuclear missiles against Nato countries participating in the bombing of Yugoslavia - followed by a retraction or "clarification" by senior aides; then a vague, apocalyptic, threat that if Nato launched a ground attack against Belgrade, it would drag Russia into what would become a global conflict.

Even if true, the missile re-targeting amounts to less than meets the eye: the operation can be carried out in a matter of minutes, if not seconds. As it was, within the hour Igor Ivanov, Russia's Foreign Minister, said he was unaware of any presidential order to that effect, a message later conveyed to the White House.

This must be set against statements by Mr Yeltsin and officials that Moscow would not allow itself to become dragged into the conflict - not least because it would forfeit any hope of brokering a Kosovo settlement, the one way in which Russia could emerge with its international prestige enhanced by the crisis. Nato diplomats say all the tough talk reflects Mr Yeltsin's desire to stave off impeachment proceedings against him in the Duma, at least as much as his anger at how the fallen superpower has been sidelined and ignored over Kosovo.

Behind the scenes Russia continues to discuss Kosovo amicably, if fruitlessly, with its Western partners. On Wednesday, senior officials of the Contact group, comprising Russia, the US, and the four main European members of the alliance, met. Yesterday, this time representing the G-8 group of major powers, they did the same in Dresden, Germany.

The US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will meet Mr Ivanov in Oslo, Norway, next week. "If things were really bad, this just wouldn't be happening," one diplomat said.

Or put another way, the Kremlin needs help from the West to resolve its desperate financial crisis a lot more than an alliance with Belgrade, that would place even further strain on its stretched resources. For similar reasons, Russian officials were yesterday dismissing any talk of a "union" with Yugoslavia, along the lines of the similar, effectively meaningless, tie-up with Belarus agreed in 1997.

Even so, Kosovo has reduced relations between Russia and the West to their lowest level since the Cold War.

Although it is half-bankrupt, demoralised and with its armed forces in decay, Moscow still has considerable residual powers of mischief-making, partly thanks to the weakness of its government. That was one reason for the words of Robin Cook yesterday that Nato was not trying to challenge Moscow in the Balkans: "There is nothing we are doing in Yugoslavia or Kosovo that causes the remotest threat to Russia."

In barely a decade Russia has passed from having one of the strongest governments in the world to one whose writ barely runs beyond the Kremlin. The question is not whether it could organise a massive and swift transfer of weapons, fuel, or other supplies to Belgrade, but whether - assuming it wanted to - it could stop independent Milosevic sympathisers in Russia doing so.

Nato spokesman accused of exaggeration by French

BRIEFINGS
By KATHERINE BUTLER in Brussels



Jamie Shea: Nato's voice

SPONTANEOUS LAUGHTER rippled through the room as journalists listened to Nato's daily press briefing. They had just heard Jamie Shea, the Nato spokesman, say that the bombing of Yugoslavia brought nothing but relief to Kosovo's oppressed Albanians. One woman, he told them, on hearing Nato jet engines overhead, said she thought it was "the sound of angels".

Mr Shea stopped in his tracks at the laughter. "Yes, that's right," he said. "The sound of angels." Reading everyone's mind, Shea added: "I could never have put it so eloquently."

This was false modesty. Mr Shea's daily briefings are a catalogue of soundbites and powerful quotes. The Serbian leader is Pol Pot or Al Capone. Fleeing refugees stripped of their identity documents are going through "an Orwellian nightmare" or "trading in their property rights for a train ticket to oblivion".

Live television broadcasts of his news conferences have turned 45-year-old Mr Shea into a household name. In fact

First in History and French from Sussex University.

His accent has attracted much comment, particularly in the class-obsessed British press, the subtext being: how did someone who sounds like Frank Butcher of *EastEnders* get to be the voice of the transatlantic military alliance?

Mr Shea is now being blamed for a number of Nato "exaggerations". Two French newspapers this week accused him of "propagating rumours". Now he has been embarrassed by Nato's admission that it bombed residential districts in the Kosovo capital, Pristina.

Those who know him say he is sincere in his feelings, both for the plight of the Kosovo Albanians and his belief in the "fundamental gospel" of Nato. As the messenger for Nato's actions and policies he is now being shot for Nato's mistakes.

But Mr Shea is more than a messenger. He has allowed himself, however reluctantly, to become the public face of the allied campaign. And, having started, he must go on justifying it, whatever happens.

Money keeps on coming in

THE INDEPENDENT'S Kosovo appeal yesterday reached £340,000 - up more than £90,000 on the previous day. The total raised by the Disasters Emergency Committee has now topped £7m.

Donors have been told that £5 will buy a blanket, £10 a hygiene pack, £30 will keep a family fed for a month and £250 will buy a tent to house several families. The Independent launched the DEC appeal with its readers last week, prompting a massive response.

The joint appeal has been organised on behalf of the British Red Cross, Christian Aid, Cafod, CARE International, UK, Children's Aid Direct, Concern Worldwide, Help The Aged, Merlin, Oxfam, Save The Children,

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Disasters Emergency Committee
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London W1N 5AD

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KOSOVO APPEAL

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scale of the disaster was such that a planned joint effort was needed to make sure the aid got to the people who most needed it as soon as possible.

Donations can be made to the appeal on 0870 6060900 or 0900 222233. Donations can also be sent to Disasters Emergency Committee Kosovo Appeal, PO Box 999, London, EC4A 9AA. Cash can be given at banks, building societies and post offices. Cheques should be made payable to Kosovo Crisis Appeal. Updates can be obtained via ITV Teletext page 520, or the DEC Internet site (www.dec.org.uk).

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WAR IN THE BALKANS

No invasion here, says Macedonia

MEETING AT NATO HEADQUARTERS

STEPHEN CASTLE in Brussels

MACEDONIA RULED out use of its territory for an "aggressive" Nato ground invasion against Serbia yesterday, but said that Western troops could use it as a "staging post" before entering Kosovo to police an agreed peace deal. The statement came after a visit by Macedonian ministers to Nato headquarters in Brussels - the latest Western effort to woo the small, but strategically crucial former Yugoslav republic.

As Nato's warplanes continued bombarding Serb military targets in Kosovo, the council held an hour-long meeting with Macedonia's foreign and defence ministers, Aleksandar Dimitrov and Nikola Kijusev, offering new security guarantees if they are attacked.

The ethnically and politically fragile Balkan state is being

courted relentlessly. At Luxembourg on Thursday European Union foreign ministers agreed a package of financial and political blandishments. The Macedonians were offered an association agreement with Europe and a role in a new forum to stabilise the region. EU membership was specifically held out as an eventual prospect.

The EU also approved a package of financial aid worth 100 million euros (£67m) for Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro to cover costs of sheltering refugees.

Despite Macedonia's brutal treatment of refugees, thousands of whom were deported from a border camp to Albania, official communiques have lavished praise on the Skopje government. Mr Kijusev said he had heard "words of gratitude,

unlike some of the criticism that was showed among the media". He attacked the BBC and CNN for unfair reporting.

The Macedonians are sensitive about the possibility of providing a staging post for a ground invasion of Kosovo, and Mr Kijusev insisted yesterday that his territory could not "be used for any kind of military aggressive action against neighbouring territories".

But he drew a distinction between this and the movement of troops into Kosovo to police an agreement reached with Belgrade. "If there is the agreement of the Yugoslav government for entrance into Yugoslavia then they will be allowed. Unless this happened, the passing of the Nato forces into Yugoslavia cannot be accepted," he said.



Refugees Ekrem (left) and Burim waiting at a hospital in Kukes, northern Albania; they were injured by shrapnel as they fled Kosovo EPA

US concerned as the war cost reaches \$500m in two weeks

AMERICAN REACTION

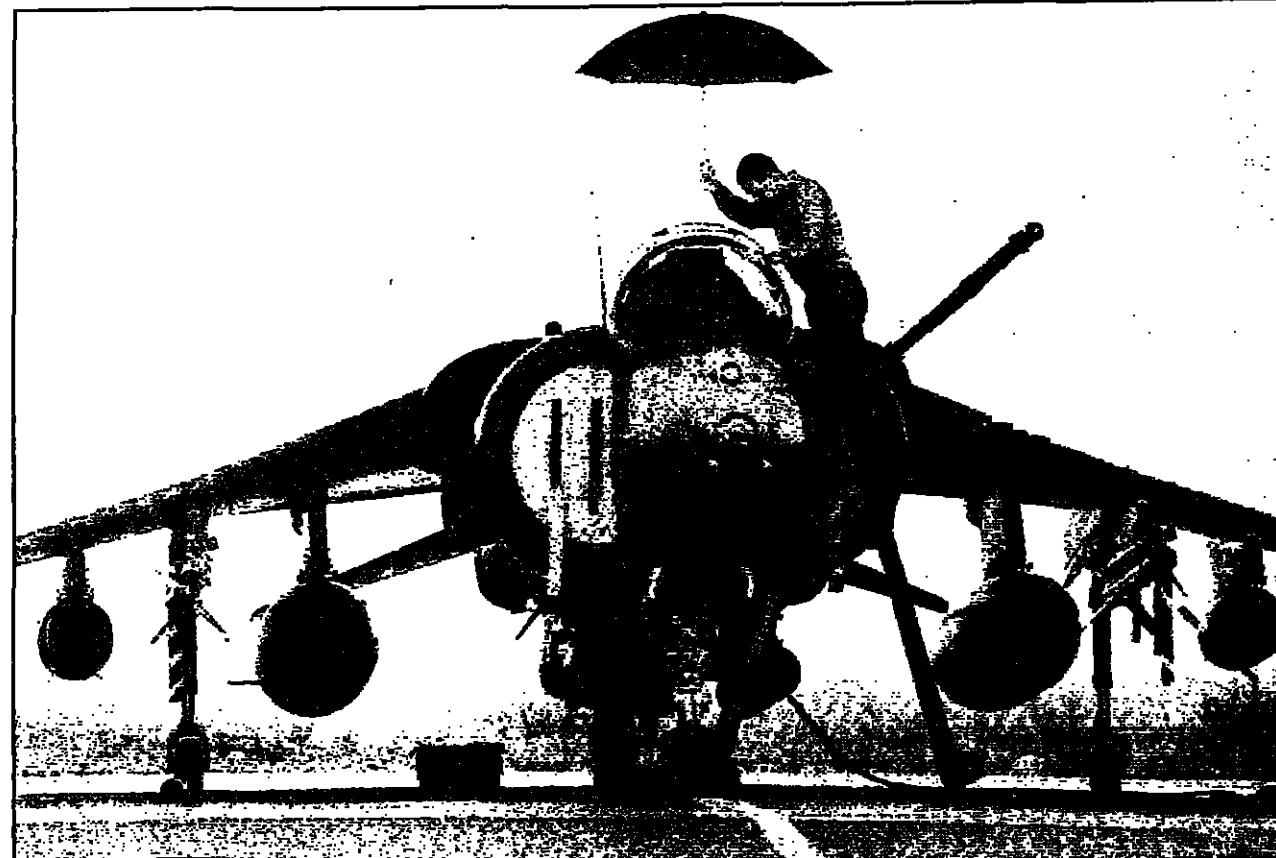
BY MARY DEJEVSKY in Washington

WITH THE US Congress set to reconvene on Monday after the Easter recess, politicians are gearing up for a good old-fashioned row over the mounting cost of the Kosovo operation - estimated to have reached \$500m (£300m) in the first two weeks.

At stake for Democrats is the Clinton administration's reputation for sound finances and their own objective of more social spending. At stake for Republicans - their much-advertised hopes for tax cuts. These preliminary skirmishes over money for the undeclared Balkan war are so far as nothing compared with the furious blame-game already washing into the public domain from the inner sanctum of the Clinton administration.

It is a fight to the death or dismissal. First out of the gate with a pre-emptive strike was the CIA, whose director, George Tenet, told friendly reporters just two days after the start of air strikes that intelligence advice to the administration had been sound. It had warned the administration in good time both about the Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's malign intentions and what he was likely to do in the event that "peace" talks failed. The CIA had a particular interest in clearing its name early, as it was still smarting from the blame that attached to it a year ago after its failure to detect that India and Pakistan were about to conduct their first nuclear tests.

With President Clinton managing to remain above the im-



An RAF Harrier, part of the massive and costly Nato force

Stephane Rousseau

mediate fray, into the dock came the Pentagon, which was blamed - perversely perhaps - for not having wanted or prepared sufficiently to fight. The joint chiefs of staff were said to have called for tougher economic sanctions in preference to military action. Shortages of air-launched cruise missiles, aviation fuel and provision for refugees were laid at their door. The joint chiefs struck back,

implying that they were hamstrung by a lily-livered White House that thought it could win a war by 'immaculate coercion' - fighting exclusively from the air without US casualties. They argued that there could be no middle way: either the White House wanted a war, in which case it had to be ready for ground troops, bodybags and all, or it should forget the whole idea.

The latest scapegoat has been the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. After a rash of (Pentagon-inspired) articles claiming that it was 'her war', she took her case direct to the viewing public. On CNN's *Larry King Show*, she defended military action as 'the only way'. Two key officials, meanwhile, have kept a judiciously low profile. The National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger,

who took the initial flak for the White House rejection of CIA and Pentagon advice, appeared less and less confident before the cameras in the first three-day propaganda effort by the White House and has made no subsequent public statements.

The Deputy Secretary of State, the resident Russia and regional specialist, Strobe Talbott, has been even quieter.

France and Nato deny report of US distrust

NATO TROOPS

BY JOHN LICHFIELD in Paris

FRANCE AND Nato yesterday vehemently denied a British press report that suggested France was not trusted by its allies to play a full-blooded part in the Balkan war.

The report in *The Daily Telegraph*, said the United States was refusing to share its most secret plans and intelligence with France. Last year a French major at Nato headquarters was arrested for passing information to Serbia on likely alliance bombing targets. Earlier, another major was withdrawn from Bosnia after becoming too close to the Bosnian-Serb military.

To that extent, the fears in Washington reported by *The Daily Telegraph* are grounded in undisputed fact. But yesterday both Nato and the French

government categorically denied any suggestion that the US was withholding information from France or any other ally.

The US is notoriously reluctant to share all its intelligence information with any ally, including Britain. There may be some information that - given the pro-Serb leanings of a few French officers - Washington prefers to keep to itself. France is not in the military wing of Nato but it is at the heart of the Nato air assault on Serbia, with 53 aircraft engaged (more than any country save the US and Britain).

France has traditional ties to Serbia but 70 per cent of French people - more than in Britain or the US - support the Nato campaign. The government is divided between a

right-wing president and a left-wing prime minister, but both men - and most of the French press - have strongly supported Nato from the beginning.

The article suggested that Washington was waiting for the French to drop out of the Nato attacks and start to pursue their own diplomatic initiatives, possibly through Russia. French and American officials rejected that possibility.

They said the ultimatum to the Serbs flowed from a Franco-British initiative, supported by Washington. The defeat of President Slobodan Milosevic and the protection of Kosovo Albanians is seen in Paris as a moral and strategic imperative for Western Europe: not something dictated by an American agenda.

TIMETABLE
DAY 17

Friday 9 April

2am

The Serbian news agency, Tanjug, reports Nato jets have struck an oil storage depot in Smederevo, east of Belgrade. It says at least seven missiles exploded in Kragujevac, 55 miles south of Belgrade.

5am

Serbian forces and KLA guerrillas exchange machine-gun fire on the Yugoslav-Albanian border and two mortar shells land in Albania.

7am

About 800 Kosovo refugees enter Macedonia, saying Serbian police stripped them of all their possessions before letting them through.

9am

United Nations refugee agency says that 10,000 ethnic Albanian refugees who were missing have been located in Macedonia and Albania.

11.05am

Tanjug says that five explosions have been heard around Pristina.

2pm

Nato says there is a Serb build-up of forces north of Kosovo and no evidence of a withdrawal.

2.05pm

Nato says a bomb aimed at the main telephone exchange in the centre Pristina on Tuesday struck a residential area.

3pm

Spyros Kyprianou of Cyprus meets Slobodan Milosevic, to try to get three United States soldiers released.



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JAN MORRISQueen
dress
for SoBlair's a
contestMillenniu
attempts

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

'He was absolutely brilliant at door-to-door canvassing, especially with the more mature ladies. They'd open the door and there was Hutch'

How they met: Martin Bell on his old friend David Soul

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING ALAIN DE BOTTON, SIMON SINGH, DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, JAN MORRIS, DEAR ANNIE, ALAN WATKINS, JOAN SMITH, MICHAEL BYWATER, AN WILSON AND WALLACE ARNOLD

Queen will dress down for Scotland

THE QUEEN will be dressing down for the opening of Scotland's home-rule parliament in Edinburgh. In keeping with the Scots' notion of the people as sovereign, the ceremony on 1 July will be dignified but without the glided extravagances of the state opening of the Westminster parliament.

Scotland's new legislators, civic leaders and young people will process on foot from Parliament House, scene of the last meeting of the pre-Union parliament in 1707, to the temporary home of its successor in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall.

The Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince of Wales and escorted by 16 troopers of the Household Cavalry, will travel along the Royal Mile in an open carriage from Holyrood Palace to the Assembly Hall. It is intended to bring her closer to the public than the enclosed state carriage used in Westminster.

The main elements of the ceremony were announced in Edinburgh yesterday, although it will be for the Presiding Officer of the new parliament – the equivalent of Speaker – and newly elected members to finalise details.

The Scottish Office said the Queen would not be wearing a

By STEPHEN GOODWIN
Scotland Correspondent

crown and full ceremonial robes. "MSPs will wear ordinary day dress. Neither the presiding officer nor anyone else will wear robes," officials said.

"The Queen will dress in a manner appropriate to a dignified, historic but modern occasion."

George Reid, constitutional affairs spokesman of the Scottish National Party, said it would have been wrong for the Queen to be wearing robes while surrounded by men in suits.

The Duke of Hamilton, hereditary keeper of the Palace of Holyrood House – a role his ancestors have fulfilled since 1640 – kept his own counsel. "The last thing the Queen needs is advice from someone like me on how to dress," he said.

The Queen will make an opening speech before the 129 parliamentarians and 500 guests, but will not read out the home-rule government's legislative programme.

One thousand children from all over Scotland will parade past a royal dias outside the Assembly Hall and there will be an RAF fly-past, despite earlier

differences over a military element.

Among the newly elected MSPs may be the first Green elected to a national parliament in Britain. After decades of standing as no-hopers, mocked by many as the "sandals and brown rice" element, the fairer voting system for the Scottish elections give Greens a good chance of at least one seat.

The system also benefits other fringe parties, notably the Scottish Socialists headed by Tommy Sheridan, the Glasgow councillor who went to jail rather than pay the poll tax.

It is ironic the Greens' break should come in Scotland, where voters have traditionally shown least interest in middle-class notions of saving the planet, but it raises intriguing possibilities. The Greens could actually hold the balance of power in a Scottish Parliament, pushing up the agenda the issue of banning genetically modified food.

Greens sit in 17 parliaments across Europe but the winner-take-all system in Britain has always thwarted them at the top level. Scotland does not even have any Green councillors while in England and Wales there are more than 100.



Seamus Heaney, who backed out of the running for Poet Laureate, saying: 'It's not my job' Colin McPherson



Carol Ann Duffy: One of two favourites for the post



Andrew Motion: Also on Poet Laureate shortlist

Heaney rules out Laureateship

SEAMUS HEANEY has ruled himself out of being Britain's next Poet Laureate. Heaney, who has won the Nobel prize for Literature was one of the front runners for the post which will be announced later this month.

There had been concern in both Downing Street and the Department of Culture that Heaney's known republican views could make such an appointment highly controversial. But yesterday Heaney saved them further worry when he

By DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

said he would not accept the post. The Londonderry-born writer is the second highly-fancied candidate to rule himself out as successor to the late Ted Hughes because of republican views. He said: "I simply couldn't write the poems for the job, and given some of the statements I have made I don't think I could accept it."

He has often used his verse to take sideswipes at British rule in Ireland.

Some of those involved in the selection process – organisations such as the Poetry Society are consulted – had hoped that he would accept the post as a way of emphasising the changing relationship between Britain and Ireland at a crucial time in the peace process.

But he said in an interview with BBC Northern Ireland, to be broadcast tomorrow, that he has had many ambitions in his

life, and being Poet Laureate is not one of them. "I simply couldn't do it, it's not my job."

His refusal comes two months after Yorkshire-born Tony Harrison sent Buckingham Palace his "refusal" with the flamboyant gesture of a scathing 94-line poem in a national newspaper.

The favourites now are Carol Ann Duffy, the Scottish-born poet, and Andrew Motion, the biographer of Keats and Philip Larkin. Tony Blair will be making a recommendation to the Queen within a few weeks.

Both Ms Duffy and Mr Motion would be willing to make Poet Laureate a more public and educational post, probably going into schools, and certainly creating verse for public occasions other than royal events.

The next poet laureate is likely for the first time to be paid for his or her verse. But there is little chance of being able to give up the day job. The salary is expected to be around £10,000.

Blair's allies shelve plan to contest NEC elections

By ANDREW GRICE
Political Editor

TONY BLAIR's allies have abandoned plans to run a slate of candidates in the elections to Labour's ruling body amid fears of a grassroots backlash against the Prime Minister.

The rethink follows growing criticism inside the party of the "control freakery" by Labour's Millbank headquarters in London, which has been accused of influencing the choice of candidates for the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament and Scottish and Welsh assemblies.

Last year, left-wingers captured four of the six places representing local parties on the National Executive Committee (NEC), in what was widely seen as a big setback for Mr Blair.

His allies now admit that it was "counter-productive" for the loyalist Members First organisation to run candidates in



Tony Blair campaigning in Dundee yesterday Scotsman

the poll. It won only two seats, despite spending a reported £100,000 on its campaign.

Privately, Blairites concede that Millbank was too closely associated with the moderate group. "Last year was not a success and we have no desire to repeat it," one party source said. Instead, Mr Blair's supporters are adopting a "softly softly" strategy, in which they hope to

She said yesterday that she was "not standing on any slate" and that the party had "moved on" from its factional battles.

Nominations for the NEC poll closed yesterday and the contest has been brought forward from October to June – announcing the results during Labour's annual conference led to damaging headlines for Mr Blair in the last two years.

Mr Blair's critics, who stood under the banner of the centre-left Grassroots Alliance last year, are running a slate again despite the loyalists' U-turn. They hope to secure re-election for last year's winners, including Liz Davies, who was banned from being a parliamentary candidate in 1997 because of her left-wing views, and Mark Seddon, editor of Tribune newspaper.

Others hoping to keep their NEC seats are left-wingers Cathy Jamieson and Pete Williams and Blairites Michael Cashman and Diana Jenda.

IN BRIEF

Baker suspended over death note

A BAKERY WORKER was suspended yesterday after a death threat was found in a loaf of bread sold at Marks & Spencer. The note – which warned: "If you eat this bread you will die a toxic death" – was discovered by a woman who bought the loaf in Guildford, Surrey on Monday.

Pupils 'saw porn in police station'

THE POLICE Complaints Authority is to investigate claims that two children, aged 12, saw a pornographic video when they were taken to Forthby police station, Merseyside, after playing truant from school. They said the film was playing on TV when they were put in a room.

Woman killed by poison wine

AN INQUEST recorded a verdict of misadventure yesterday on Charlotte Common, 55, who died after drinking wine containing methyl alcohol in Egypt. A friend who drank it probably survived only because she added brandy, the Newcastle upon Tyne hearing was told.

Rothschilds' £25m looted art sale

A MASSIVE collection of art, once stolen by the Nazis from the Rothschild family, is expected to fetch an estimated £25m when it goes under the hammer at Christie's in London. The collection includes a Frans Hals portrait worth £5m and a medieval Book of Hours, worth £3m.

Millennium baby attempts 'risky'

HEALTH OFFICIALS have warned couples not to fall for "media hype" by trying to conceive tonight in an attempt to have the first baby of the new millennium.

Tonight is theoretically the ideal night to conceive in order to give birth on 1 January. Tabloid newspaper editors and publicists such as Max Clifford are already promising untold millions to the first baby of the new year. But consultants are worried that a surge in births could pose health risks because hospitals will be operating with few staff.

Chemists are reporting a jump in the sales of pregnancy tests and ovulation predictors. But family planning experts are warning that the chances of timing a birth exactly were slim. Only five per cent of women

By PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

have babies when forecast. Tonight ITV is screening a programme with a guide to conception and romantic films while Classic FM has a night of "smooth classics".

A spokeswoman for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said: "The notion that the nation is going to be bonking [tonight] in order to have a baby on a certain day is absurd. Would-be parents want to conceive when it's right for them."

In Norway workers were given a morning off so they could use the time to produce a millennium baby. Anton Dahl, the Mayor of Kautukain, said: "This is a big joint effort for our town and I expect everyone to do their best."

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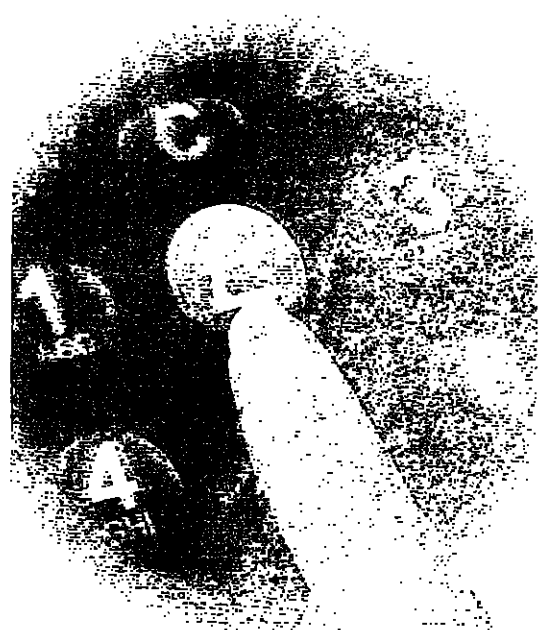
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Severe setback for media empire

RUPERT MURDOCH'S global ambitions received a rude shock yesterday when the Government stopped him getting his own way in Britain for the first time since 1969.

The rejection of his bid for Manchester United is the latest in a series of setbacks for the Australian-American's media empire. As well as blowing a hole in his strategy to dominate the future of British football, it might severely damage his present monopoly of British pay-TV.

At a time when he is investing heavily in launching a digital television service, he finds his British football monopoly threatened and his chances of building his business in Europe undermined. It is the biggest reversal for the billionaire's company since he was almost bankrupted by debts in the early Nineties.

One reason for buying Manchester United was as a hedge against losing the exclusive television rights to the Premier League. The threat to the contract comes from the Restrictive Practices Court, which is currently hearing a case brought by the Office of Fair Trading against the Premier League.

The OFT contends that the league acts as a cartel when it sells exclusive television rights for all the top English clubs.

The court's decision will be known in the summer and if it tears up BSkyB's deal with the Premier League, there will be a free-for-all as teams sell rights to their games to individual broadcasters, undermining his Sky Sports channels.

The setback comes after a series of rebuffs for Mr Murdoch in his attempt to break into

pay-per-view market. The other threatening scenario after 2001 would be if the Premier League itself set up a television channel to sell games to cable, satellite and digital broadcasters.

The decision will also have an impact on Mr Murdoch's plans outside the UK. Ownership of Manchester United would have given him a say in the shape of any future European super league - and in who wins its television rights.

This is the first regulatory reverse for Mr Murdoch in the UK since he tried to become chief executive of London Weekend Television in the late Sixties, and it may have an impact on his close links with Tony Blair.

Many Labour MPs opposed the deal and feared the Government would try to find a way to wave it through.

The special Blair-Murdoch relationship was sealed on the first night of the 1997 general election campaign, when Stuart Higgins, editor of *The Sun* at the time, telephoned the Prime Minister's press secretary to tell him the Murdoch-owned paper was to declare its support for Mr Blair on the next day's front page.

The contrast with the previous election could not have been greater. On polling day in 1992, *The Sun*'s front page, showing Neil Kinnock's head superimposed on a lightbulb, said: "If Kinnock wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights."

Mr Blair adopted a very different strategy with Mr Murdoch from his predecessors, epitomised when he flew to Hayman Island off Australia to address Mr Murdoch's editors and executives at his News

Corp's annual brain-storming session.

What, if anything, did Mr Murdoch get in return for supporting Mr Blair? Perhaps the two things that mattered most to him. First, Labour dropped its previous plans for a tougher regime on cross-media ownership, which would have forced him to sell some of his newspapers to keep BSkyB.

Second, the Blair government rejected demands in Parliament to stop "predatory pricing" by newspapers, a tactic pioneered by *The Times*, owned by Mr Murdoch's News International. However, there is growing concern within News Corp that this concession may now be in jeopardy. John Bridgeman, director-general of fair trading, is due to decide



Rupert Murdoch (centre) watching his Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team in the United States
John Soo Hoo/AP

shortly whether to refer the matter to the Competition Commission.

Mr Blair has also helped Labour's old adversary by watering down trade union recognition rights, after fierce lobbying by News International, and by supporting Mr Murdoch's hopes to expand into Italian television during a phone call with Romano Prodi,

who was Italian prime minister at the time.

Although Mr Murdoch will not be happy about the Government's decision to block BSkyB's bid for Manchester United, some aides do not believe he will regard it as a "make or break" issue. Others take a different view. One said: "Blair will be punished for this."

Ministers, naturally, hope otherwise. "We don't think he will go to the stake over this," a government source said last night.

There is little enthusiasm in Mr Murdoch's group for William Hague, despite the Tory leader's opposition to the single currency. Mr Murdoch, who likes backing winners, may calculate that it is in his best business interests to stick with Mr Blair.

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United is what matters



United is what matters

Fans hail decision as a great victory for the game

THE BLOCKING of the deal with Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB was hailed by fans last night as a "victory for football".

Andy Walsh, chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (Imusa), said: "Back at the beginning of September when the takeover was made public, nobody gave us a snowball's chance in hell of blocking the bid. But, through a passionate belief in the need for United to remain independent, we have

succeeded... our feeling is one of absolute euphoria."

Independent shareholders were equally jubilant. Paul Richards, of the anti-Murdoch group, said: "Manchester United's future is pretty well assured as an independent company and an incredibly successful company... I think this has drawn a line in the sand. All those media conglomerates who've been planning to take

over clubs will have to go back to the drawing board."

Ray Ekersley, a member of Imusa and a shareholder, called for Martin Edwards, the club's chief executive, to resign. "For the way he has treated the fans purely for his own commercial interests, he has to go," he said.

Steve Briscoe, a fan, said: "It's not a soap brand - you can't go and watch another team, like Liverpool. It's football, and Manchester United is what matters."

The club issued a statement which read: "Although disappointed by this decision, the board is confident that Manchester United will maintain its record of success."

John Redwood, the Tory trade and industry spokesman, said the decision left unresolved questions. "The Government still owes the media industry and the sporting world an explanation about what it wants to happen next. We need to know how clubs can profit from their val-

able media rights as they are an important source of money to develop the game."

"We need to know if this means that the Government is to allow clubs to negotiate individually with TV companies, and the media needs to know what kind of promotional links it can develop in the sporting world. This one-off decision is half-baked - it leaves everyone unsure of how sport and the media can develop together."

David Chidgey, the Liberal

Democrat trade and industry spokesman, said: "This is a long-overdue signal from the MMC that News International's predatory ambitions must be curbed."

Vic Wakeling, managing director of Sky Sports, said on Sky News: "It is a blow, I believe, to football, because football clubs in this country are facing increasing competition from clubs in Europe, who are allowed partnerships of this type... Our clubs are now at a disadvantage in terms of Eu-

mark

European and...

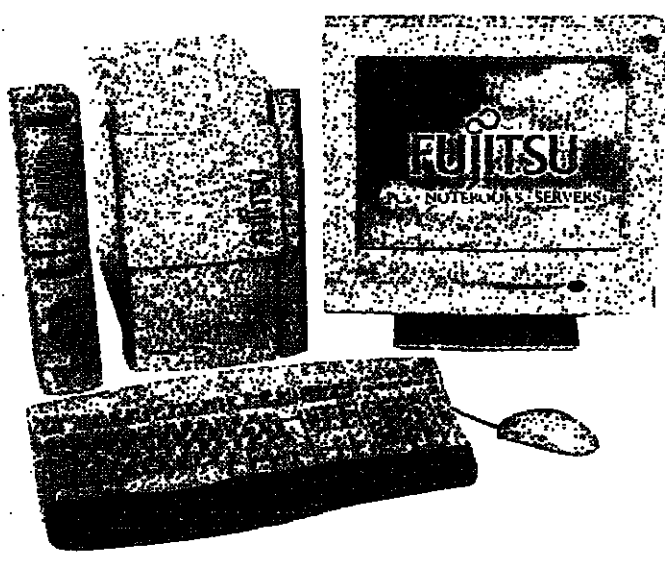
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New leads on Lawrence out of TV show

TWO WITNESSES came forward with potentially crucial information about the Stephen Lawrence case after television interviews were broadcast with the five murder suspects, police sources said yesterday.

An appeal for information, made after the interviews were screened on Thursday, prompted a huge public response.

John Grieve, Deputy Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Lawrence case, said: "Our switchboard lit up like the Spanish City (entertainment arcades) in Whitley Bay."

"We have never seen anything like it, and out of it we got two more nuggets of gold."

Police sources said he was referring to two witnesses who approached police after watching the interviews of Neil Acourt, Jamie Acourt, David Norris, Luke Knight and Gary Dobson. Mr Grieve said that the interviews, conducted by Martin Bashir for the ITV current affairs programme *Tonight With Trevor McDonald*, had yielded one new line of inquiry to pursue. "It's one more piece of the jigsaw puzzle. It's not a crucial piece of evidence."

The new line is thought to be

BY KATHY MARKS

the disclosure by Norris that he was at his girlfriend's house in Eltham, south-east London, on the night Stephen was murdered by a racist gang in April 1993. Norris had previously said he could not recall his whereabouts; the revelation places him half a mile from the murder scene.

Norris and Jamie Acourt have never stood trial for the killing and could thus, theoretically, still face prosecution. The other three were acquitted at the Old Bailey in 1996 after the Lawrence family mounted a private prosecution.

Mr Grieve, who heads the Metropolitan Police's specialist taskforce on racial and violent crime, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that information given to police now could still prove vital. "Six years down the line we can do things with what is occurring at the moment, and we would like to hear from people who have direct knowledge," he said.

"We know that conversations are taking place, we know they continue to take place. Tell us what you know - trust us."

He said the passage of time could sometimes be helpful to police. "Alliances change. Friendships change. Friends change. People change their behaviour. There are some interesting things to discover yet about the jigsaw puzzle that makes up Stephen's murder."

Mr Grieve's team, code-named Athena, comprises 15 detectives at Scotland Yard and units based in north and south London. It has already achieved some high-profile results, most notably in arresting three men for the murder of Michael Menson, the black musician who died after being set alight in north London.

Mr Grieve is taking a fresh look at the evidence in the Lawrence case, gathered during three police investigations. Surveillance teams have also been deployed.

Mr Grieve believes Knight and Dobson were probably not involved in the murder and his team is looking at a number of new suspects.

Asked whether he was hopeful of achieving results, he said: "I wouldn't be doing this job if I didn't think it possible to bring Stephen's killers to justice."



For Sale signs flourish in Islington, north London, amid talk of a boom in house prices - but it is not good news for all

Tom Pilon

Spring boom in house prices 'is no cause for celebration'

IT MUST be spring. The sun is out, the tulips are in bloom; there are reports of the first cuckoo. And newspapers blossom with headlines of an imminent boom in house prices.

The collapse in interest rates means mortgages are more affordable than for many

BY STEVE CRAWSHAW

years. There is talk of London house prices rising by 30 to 40 per cent within five years. Lenders are confident things are going in the right direction. Halifax talks of a "house-price rebound" after months of stag-

nation, and others have been similarly upbeat.

Yet none of this makes much difference to the vast majority of house owners. Certainly, for a few, a price boom can be seen as unadulterated good news - especially those who least need the windfall.

For those selling up and moving to a smaller property, an increase in house prices is like winning the lottery. And those who inherit property find themselves richer than they had dreamed of.

For the rest the story is less clear. First, there is the question of whether the much-vaunted boom really is on the way. This week's Halifax house price survey described a 1.2 per cent rise in March. The annual rate of house-price inflation is now 4.4 per cent. Halifax and others expect house-price inflation for 1999 of about 4 per cent - hardly dramatic.

Even if house prices were to rocket as they did during the 1980s - with rises of 25 per cent over a year in some areas of

London and the South-east - there may be little reason for most people to cheer.

A first-time buyer will find the bottom rung of the ladder is higher off the ground. Even owner-occupiers who have made a tidy pile on their property find they are stretched if they try to move up a rung.

Yolande Barnes, research director at property consultants FPD Savills, says a price boom is no cause for celebration. The knock-on effect of a cut in interest rates is a renewal of the boom-bust cycle in the housing market, she says. "The only questions then will be: when will the boom stop, to what extent will prices have grown above sustainable levels and how far will prices fall in the ensuing slump?"

Sue Reid of the Council of Mortgage Lenders says we should be interested in seeing only "modestly rising price rises", if disaster is not to follow. Boom leads to a repetition of the negative-equity horror stories from the crash in the

early 1990s, when those who bought at the top could sell only at a loss.

Britain is singularly obsessed with house prices as a measure of our well-being. More than two-thirds of properties in this country are owner-occupied, compared with 40 per cent in Germany. At the turn of the century, 90 per cent of Britain's population lived in rented property. The property boom started in 1945.

Some say our house-buying habits may hamper the merging of interest rates with our continental neighbours.

John Muellbauer, professor of economics at Nuffield College, Oxford, believes a surge in house prices is bad news. "I think it could scupper our chances of joining the European monetary union," he says.

Perhaps that's the point. The joyful talk of sky-high house prices is a secret plot by the Eurosceptics to ensure the pound stays sovereign for eternity. What fiendish plan will they come up with next?

How to get the best deal

YOU'VE NEVER had it so good. To millions of UK mortgage borrowers, Harold Macmillan's famous assessment, first made in the Fifties, could ring equally true today.

Not only are variable mortgage rates, ranging between 6 and 6.95 per cent, at their lowest point for more than 30 years, the variety of home loans is greater than ever before. It is increasingly unnecessary for any borrower to opt for a traditional 25-year loan, involving regular monthly payments. It is now possible to choose from a bewildering range of up to 4,000 home loan options, including capped, discounted and fixed mortgages - or hybrid products that offer a mixture of the benefits of each.

Among the available deals is a fixed mortgage from Bristol

BY NIC CICUTTI
Personal Finance Editor

& West, pegged at 3.94 per cent for a year and thereafter variable. Hanley Economic Building Society is offering a "capped" deal, whereby rates are guaranteed not to rise above 4.95 per cent until February 2002. But if rates should fall, so will this mortgage.

Perhaps the most significant change to the mortgage market in the past 18 months is the growing popularity of "flexible" mortgages. These are loans where it is possible to over-pay by as much as you want and borrow back what you have paid in, whenever you need it. Everyone, from Alliance & Leicester to Saffron Walden Building Society, has now got into the act.

Many flexible mortgage lenders have coupled their loans with a new way of calculating the interest owed. Instead of crediting payments to a mortgage account once a year, they do so on a daily basis.

The effect can be substantial: both Halifax and Yorkshire Bank both charge a variable rate of 6.95 per cent on their loans. But Yorkshire's daily interest calculation means that a 25-year mortgage would be paid off nine months earlier than Halifax's, saving thousands in interest payments.

A handful of lenders take this flexibility to its ultimate conclusion. First Active, Virgin Direct and Kleinwort Benson offer "bank account mortgages", where all financial transactions take place within the loan account itself.

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Cockle wars being fought on beaches

DEEP IN Dylan Thomas country "no good boy" is increasingly turning to the shoreline to earn his beer money. The prospect of making a few bob on the side by illegally raiding the cockle beds has stirred him from his legendary inertia.

Organised gangs of ne'er do wells from Llanelli and Laugharne are plundering the molluscs under the very noses of fisheries protection officers. The officials are spat at and threatened with violence for attempting to protect the harvest.

The cockle rustlers, who are attempting to muscle in on the industry, operate under cover of darkness. They are equipped with sieves, rakes and stolen four-wheel-drive vehicles for making off with the booty. Lookouts warn the poachers of the presence of inspectors by mobile phone. Fist fights often erupt between rival gangs as they compete for the most toothsome specimens.

The activities are becoming an increasing headache for the South Wales Sea Fisheries

BY BARRIE CLEMENT

Committee, which admits that the rustlers are slippery customers. Inspectors have nowhere to hide in the vast wastes of muddy sand exposed by the retreating tide. So they have taken to using night-vision and state-of-the-art telescopes, which can pick out a face at three miles. A record 56 poachers were prosecuted last year, but the committee concedes that it has insufficient staff to police the problem properly. Miscreants are normally fined a few hundred pounds, compared with a maximum £5,000.

A quaint local problem it might be, but it can turn nasty. In the great cockle war of '93 platoons of Deesiders descended on unlicensed beds near Laugharne because of a shortage in their area. Locals, who have no exclusive rights to the harvest in that area, set about the invaders with baseball bats. One merchant was threatened with a shotgun for

daring to buy the contraband. Since then there have been skirmishes between locals and the "foreigners" from North Wales, although one police officer in Llanelli looked on the bright side: "When they're out stealing cockles, they are not breaking into people's homes. The greater the value of cockles, the more they go poaching and the lower the crime rate in town."

The price of cockles reached a record £85 a hundredweight towards the end of last year, but has since slipped to £10. Nevertheless the cockleshell cowboys of South West Wales are often out in force. "They seemed to get a taste for it last year when the prices were high," according to an official at the fisheries committee.

It is a risky business. A thorough knowledge of tides is necessary and so is the position of deep gutters, which can't be seen in the dark. The quicksand is also best avoided, says Byron Preston of Penclawdd Shellfish, a co-operative formed by 11

families in the area. The remnants of a recent night can be seen off Llanelli in the shape of a four-wheel-drive vehicle that got stuck and has stayed there ever since, disappearing from view when the tide is in. A minority of the raiders are families who bring their children along to gather what locals believe are the juiciest, meatiest cockles in the world.

While the rustlers get much

of the bad publicity, locals point out that licence holders who fish in the Burry Inlet are not above turning a dishonest cockle. In some instances they have even taken to "laundering" the ill-gotten molluscs of the poachers by selling them on to merchants, said a spokesman for the fisheries inspectorate.

Some official operators, such as Jeff Williams who has

fished in the licensed Burry Inlet between Llanelli and Penclawdd for 38 years, have incurred the wrath of the committee by exceeding the quota. Mr Williams was caught with more than the legal 500 hundredweight per day and has been suspended from the beds for three months.

Not that there is an insatiable appetite for the product locally. Mr Williams says that

the increasing range of food available from all over the world means that South Walesians are turning their noses up at cockles and lava bread, the dark green viscous mush made out of seaweed.

Most of the output of Penclawdd Shellfish ends up in omelettes and fish stews on the plates of continentalers. When they have a mind to, locals eat them doused in malt vinegar

and powdered liberally with white pepper.

What with the fluctuations in price, the depredations of cowboys and the sporadic attentions of fisheries inspectors, the industry is in something of a turmoil. "People from London will look at me gathering cockles out in the estuary and say, 'Look at that lucky bugger by there,'" said Mr Williams, "but I tell you it's no picnic."



A licensed cockle dealer on the Penclawdd Sands, the scene of cockle rustling under the noses of fisheries protection officers Rob Stratton

Chipperfield fined but can keep animals

BY CLARE GARNER

THE CIRCUS trainer Mary Chipperfield was pelted with eggs, rotten fruit and abuse yesterday as she left court after being fined £7,500 plus £12,240 costs for cruelty to Trudy, the baby chimpanzee.

Two hundred protesters chanted "Bloody Mary," "Scum," "Bitch," and "Animal hater." More than 60 police officers escorted Chipperfield and her husband, Roger Cawley, who had been fined £1,000 for cruelty to a sick elephant.

The couple were driven away by officers, some demonstrators trying to lie down in front of the vehicle or hurl themselves on the bonnet.

"The monkey will stay with its new owners," she had said in a statement through her solicitor at Aldershot magistrates' court, Hampshire. "They can keep the monkey."

Animal rights campaigners welcomed the news that Trudy would stay at Monkey World, a primate sanctuary in Dorset, but called the fine paltry.

"This kind of punishment doesn't fit the crime," said Jan Creamer, director of Animal Defenders, the group that used hidden cameras to expose how Chipperfield beat Trudy with a riding crop at her training quarters in Middle Wallop.

"The magistrate had the power to remove their licence and he hasn't done so. It makes



Mary Chipperfield: Had to have police protection

a mockery of everything that we have done. We are going to have to go back to our own legal team to see what we can do about it."

Chipperfield, 61, was found guilty on 12 counts of cruelty to 18-month-old Trudy in January. Her 64-year-old husband was convicted of whipping the sick elephant round a circus ring.

Jim Cronin, the sanctuary director, said yesterday: "It wasn't until this moment that the Chipperfields accepted Trudy can stay at Monkey World. It is Trudy's third birthday today and Alison [his wife] and I are absolutely delighted."

Chipperfield's statement expressed remorse, but said she would continue to be involved with the "welfare" of animals.

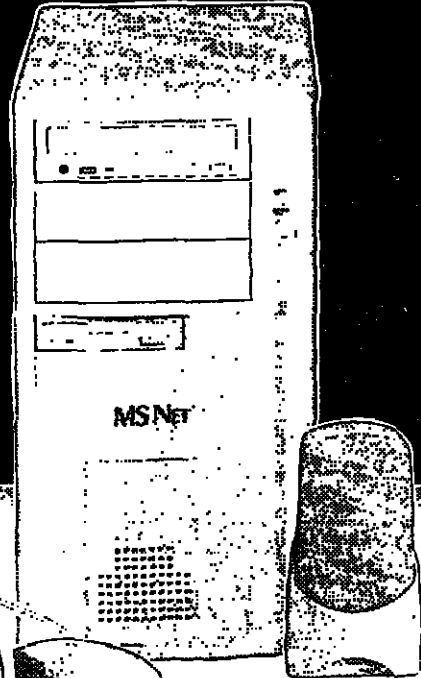
"I will continue to care for all my animals in a humane way in the future," she said.

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Blonde: Marilyn Monroe

The image that started it all. She may have more fun but the platinum blonde hair colouring automatically makes people assume the person is dumb



Natural blonde: Ulrika Jonsson

Blondes who didn't revert to the dye bottle were seen as more popular than those with other hair colours



Brunette: Jackie Kennedy Onassis

This hair colour was seen as indicating a shy person while the fiery redhead stereotype appears no longer to exist

Glum lives begin with early birth

CHILDREN WHO are born prematurely are less likely to grow up happy and may have social problems in later life, according to new research.

Dr Elizabeth Hoy, of Queen's University, Belfast, told the British Psychological Society yesterday that toddlers born with very low birth weight were less likely to smile or laugh and were emotionally impaired when compared with other children. "These children spent more of their time showing no emotion at all. They were emotionally flat," she said.

Dr Hoy said that the emotional dampening was not caused by physical damage to the brain but by them being overloaded with stimuli in the early weeks of their lives. "Instead of being in the womb, where it is nice and quiet, they are thrust into the world very early, before they are able to cope. The highly stimulating

BY CHERRY NORTON
Health Correspondent

world of the neo-natal care units is a world full of monitors, lights and procedures that prove painful," she said.

Although nurses do their best to lessen the pain for infants in intensive care units, the children are normally disturbed every 20 minutes.

Parents can help children who are born prematurely by encouraging them to express themselves in their own time. "Parents are often anxious with premature children that they will not develop properly. They try to compensate by stimulating the child and this can frighten and overload the children," Dr Hoy told the society's conference in Belfast. She said some mothers were very good at listening patiently to children and pushing them gently in the right

direction, but that others tended to over-stimulate them in an attempt to elicit a reaction. "It is very difficult for parents - especially if they have previously lost a child, possibly a twin - and they will want to compensate for the pain their child has undergone.

"But over-compensation is not the answer. The parents need to learn to be patient and quiet and allow their children to display emotion when the time is right."

The study was conducted on 52 toddlers who were conceived at about the same time. Those in the premature group were, on average, 21 months old and their social behaviour was compared with 18-month-olds who were born at the normal birth weight. The premature babies had an average birth weight of under 1kg (2lb 3oz). All the mothers came from a similar social background and

the number of other children in the house was taken into account. The researchers videoed the children playing and assessed the levels of sociability, smiling, laughter and activity.

"The picture was one of less emotional intensity. The low birth weight children gave fewer, shorter smiles and laughs than the other children," said Dr Hoy.

Research conducted in the United States has shown that creating a calmer environment in neo-natal intensive care improves the social behaviour of these premature babies.

The study confirms previous work conducted by Dr Hoy that showed that seven-year-olds thought their classmates who had been born prematurely were sad and unhappy.

Teachers also reported that these children were quieter and more withdrawn.

Dumb blonde image is still alive and well

THE DUMB blonde image perpetuated by Marilyn Monroe is as alive today as it was in the 1950s, according to a new study. Researchers have found that people make snap judgements about levels of intelligence, shyness and popularity based on a woman's hair colour.

"Most people are unaware that they are reverting to stereotype, which is frightening if they are interviewing someone or the meeting has an important outcome," said Doctor Tracy Cassidy of the University of Coventry, who presented his findings at the British Psychological Society's annual conference yesterday.

The research showed that platinum blondes were rated as less intelligent, brunettes as more shy and natural blondes as more popular when compared with other hair colours.

In the study, which involved 120 men and women aged between 20 and 25, participants assessed four photographs of a 21-year-old female model who was wearing a brown, red, natural blonde or platinum wig.

BY CHERRY NORTON

They rated each photograph on a seven-point scale for intelligence, shyness, aggressiveness, temperament and popularity.

Although the platinum blonde was rated as popular by both men and women she was seen as less intelligent, particularly by the men. "We have found that the dumb blonde stereotype is alive and well and is particularly extreme in men," said Dr Cassidy.

The study found that there was no difference perceived in aggressiveness or temperament for the four different hair colours and both sexes had the same prejudices about women's hair colour. But red-haired women were not rated as more temperamental than the other hair types, suggesting that the fiery redhead stereotype no longer exists.

"The popular natural blonde may be part of the generalisation that is often portrayed in the media that blondes have more fun," added Dr Cassidy.

Brain 'lag' makes teenagers clumsy

ADOLESCENT BOYS are clumsy and awkward because their brains cannot keep up with their growth rate, according to new research. But this embarrassing stage should last only a year.

Dr Dorothy Hefferman, of the University of Strathclyde, studied 55 boys aged 12 to 13 - when growth spurts normally occur. In the previous six months, 22 of them had grown rapidly - 5.9cm - and the others, 33cm. She tested the boys' co-ordination using a reaching test: the boys had to estimate how far they could reach with a long pole with a weight at the

BY CHERRY NORTON

end and then attempt to do it. The boys in the rapid-growth group over-estimated their ability and were twice as likely to fall over than the other boys.

"Our prediction of how far we can reach is based on an understanding of the size and shape of our bodies," Dr Hefferman told the British Psychological Society's conference yesterday. "If your body is changing rapidly, your brain needs to update this information. It appears there is a time lag for adolescent boys, which causes them to be clumsy."

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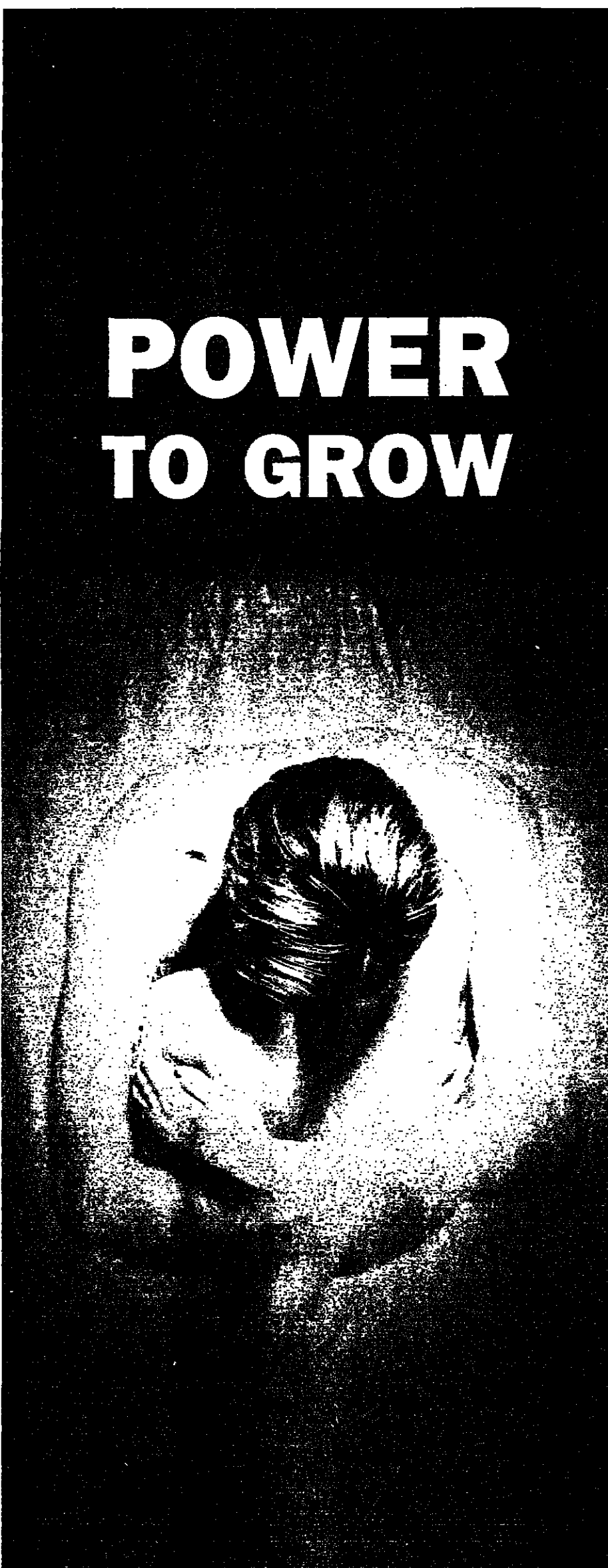
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Curious case of the high-flying Tory treasurer and the sinking ships

By FRANK ABRAMS,
STEVE BOGGAN
AND ANDREW MULLINS

HE'S A multi-millionaire, treasurer of the Tory party, a City takeover expert, tax exile, ambassador to the United Nations, and friend of the Thatchers - Michael Ashcroft's cv is impressive.

But as he launches another takeover battle in the City - having shunned the Square Mile for more than a decade - it has emerged that Britain's 24th richest man also controls the "flag of convenience" of the central American state of Belize, which has one of the world's worst safety records.

Almost half the central American country's vessels - few of which have any real connection with the country - were detained because of safety defects between 1994 and 1996: only Honduras had a worse record.

Last year five sailors on a Belize-registered ship, the *Rema*, died off Whitby, North Yorkshire, when their ship sank after being detained by coastguards because it was not safe.

Mr Ashcroft's company has operational control of and a 50 per cent stake in the Belize shipping register, an official government body responsible for maintaining safety standards in the merchant fleet.

Mr Ashcroft, aged 52, holds both British and Belize nationality, is Belize's ambassador to the UN. A tax exile who lives in Florida, he keeps most of his £500m fortune offshore and is not registered to vote at the Belgrave home he maintains in this country. The six-storey house is now on the market with a price tag of almost £3m.

William Hague is under pressure to sack his party's treasurer. Labour has attacked Mr Ashcroft, who has made large donations to the Conservative Party, over his control of the flag of convenience and is also urging Mr Hague to refer his funding of the party to Lord Neill's committee on standards in public life.

Born in Chichester, West Sussex, in 1946, he can stay only



Michael Ashcroft: 'Brilliant, but ruthless' ITN/ReX

90 days each year in Britain, yet is bankrolling its main opposition party with, it is said, an eye on a knighthood.

Peter Bradley, Labour MP for The Wrekin, has written to the Tory leader asking why the party is accepting money from Mr Ashcroft when the Neill committee recommended that political parties should not accept overseas donations.

Belize has yet to sign a UN Convention passed in 1986, which calls for a genuine connection between ships and their flag states and which demands that countries ensure their ships are safe.

David Cockcroft, general secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, described the Belize register as a "sleazy" operation: "It is one of the select few registers in the shipping industry which

will register anybody. It exists for no other function whatever except to make money and is used only by ship owners who have no reputation to lose."

Mr Ashcroft is publicity-shy but, in a statement, his office said reports that he gave or lent up to £2m to the Conservatives were "extremely exaggerated." The shipping register was a "passive interest" in which he had no direct involvement, and the number of deaths was very low, at about one a year on average.

He has just launched a £282m takeover bid for Corporate Services Group, a play which, in true Ashcroft style, is also complex, controversial and meeting hostility.

The City never liked Mr Ashcroft's brand of slick deals and fast fortunes in the Eighties, and it became even more

wary when he relocated his business in 1984 - overnight and in complete secrecy - to the tax haven of Bermuda.

He seems to enjoy tax havens. His influence in Belize is immense. Last summer, he helped to fund the right-wing People's United Party (PUP), which comfortably saw off the main opposition, the United Democratic Party (UDP), in an election awash with cash and favours.

The champagne corks had barely stopped popping at the PUP's headquarters when Mr Ashcroft joked about the amount of cash he had pumped into the party: "If I'd have known they were going to win by so much, I'd have saved myself some money," he is reported to have remarked.

In Belize, there is a sense of *deja vu*. "Before the PUP came into power the last time, in 1989, Mr Ashcroft was concerned that they opposed him and he felt it important that he should have a dialogue with them," said Manuel Esquivel, the former UDP prime minister. "Since then, he is rumoured to have given them at least \$1m (£640,000) and now he wields enormous influence."

Mr Ashcroft was attracted by Belize's potential as an offshore tax haven - he bought its main bank, made generous political donations, drew up legislation for the government to adopt, bought 25 per cent of its telecommunications company, 20 per cent of one of its two citrus fruit producers, and was made Belize's UN ambassador.

His links with the tiny country of Belize (population 230,000) go back to his childhood when his father, Frederick, had a post with the colonial service.

Mr Ashcroft started his business career with Carreras, part of the Rothman group, as a trainee manager. After two years of boredom, he left at 26 and started a small cleaning business, which he sold to Reckitt and Colman for £1m just four years later. That, however, was not enough for a man who lives for the deal.

In 1977, he bought Hawley-Goodall, a small tent-making

company that diversified wildly through acquisitions, and set him on the road to his many millions, which climaxed two decades later when, in 1997, he sold his main company ADT, the security and motor auctions group, to Tyco International, a US company, for about £2.5bn. Mr Ashcroft's share was £154m and he still retains a half per cent interest in Tyco, worth £195m.

He also owns 66 per cent of BHI Corporation (Belize Holdings Inc), the holding company for the Bank of Belize. In November 1998 his BHI stock was worth £170m and his share of Carlisle Holdings, a Guernsey-based property and acquisitions group, is worth £120m.

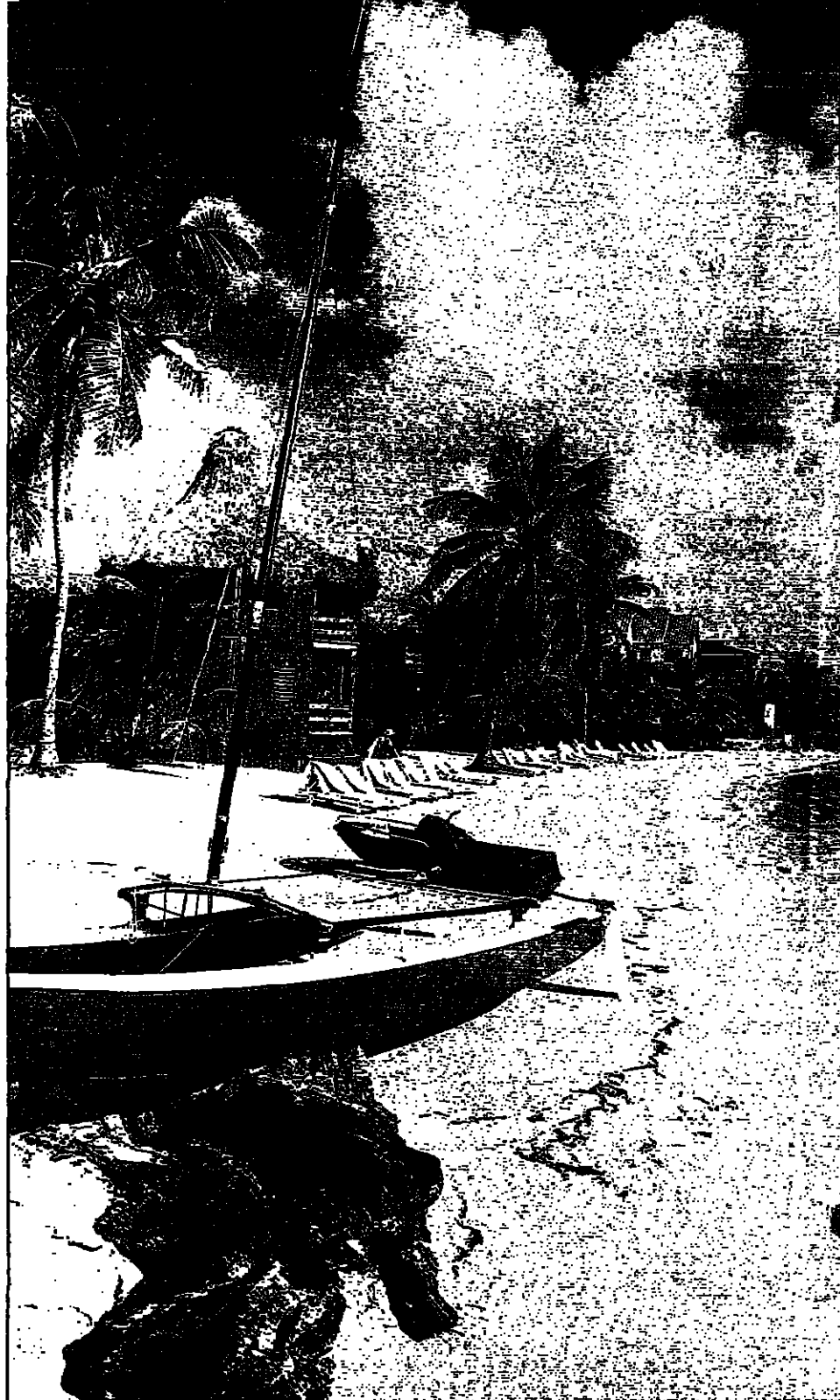
Former colleagues describe him as brilliant but ruthless. "He is cruel and he seems to get sadistic pleasure from beating the other guy to the deal," said one former executive. "He is driven not so much by the money, as the skill it takes to get it." He also has the rather odd hobby of collecting Victoria Crosses - he is said to have more than 100.

His relationship with the Conservatives has been dogged by the same kind of snobbery that drove him from the City. In spite of agreeing to underwrite up to half of the party's £16m debt before the last election, he has not been universally welcomed by party members.

"You only have to look at his rollercoaster business dealings. He is not an altruistic person, he is a person who pursues power. That worries many of us," said one party grandee.

Mr Ashcroft maintains an office in the Conservative Party's Smith Square headquarters and is said to have a strong influence over Mr Hague and the party chairman, Archie Norman.

Some party members and backbench MPs have privately expressed disquiet at Mr Ashcroft's central role in the party. Baron McAlpine of West Green, a former treasurer under Margaret Thatcher, blocked his appointment to the treasurer's job when he first sought it in 1990.



The idyll of Belize, where Mr Ashcroft wields enormous influence

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Sell-by date plan for football kit

FOOTBALL CLUBS may be made to put sell-by dates on all the replica kits they sell.

The proposal is expected to come from the Football Task Force, which is gathering evidence in a long-running inquiry into the replica kits industry.

A task-force source confirmed yesterday that one recommendation under discussion was a sell-by date, identifying how long it would be before a strip was substituted with a new design. The replica England strip retails at £72 for an

By EILEEN MURPHY

adult's shirt, shorts and socks, while a child's size costs £56. A new design was unveiled this week and will be launched on 23 April, but the maker, Umbro, would not say how much that kit will cost.

Other possible task-force recommendations include setting up a statutory football regulator with powers to restrict teams who produced too many kits, and placing a two-year minimum shelf life on all new kits.

Preston North End, a second division club, already tells fans the sell-by date of strips, saying it is "fairer" to do this.

The task force, led by David Mellor, the former Tory heritage secretary, has also looked at why kits sell with a mark-up

of up to 75 per cent. It is expected to report to Tony Banks, the Sports minister, in May.

Meanwhile, the Office of Fair Trading said yesterday it had completed an inquiry into alleged price fixing for replica kits of the Premiership clubs.

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Fred Barker, the owner of Lushill Farm, Wiltshire, where a field trial of GM crops is taking place. Geoff Pugh

GM crop trial will stay despite error

THE GOVERNMENT refused yesterday to stop the first field-scale trial of genetically modified (GM) crops, although the planting broke its own rules for notification.

Seeds planted over the Easter weekend at Lushill Farm in Hannington, near Swindon, Wiltshire, will be allowed to grow, despite people in the area not being informed by a notice in their local paper that the trial would be made.

Under the rules of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), any company intending to grow GM organisms outdoors must place a notice in a paper serving the local area.

On the Today programme yesterday Michael Meacher, the Environment minister, insisted that the Gloucestershire Echo - where an advert about the planned planting appeared on March 9 - did cover the area.

By CHARLES ARTHUR
Technology Editor

But the Echo insisted its 25,000 circulation stopped at Cirencester, about 15 miles northwest of Hannington.

Although that means AgrEvo, which provided the seeds, is clearly in breach of the Government's rules, and Mr Meacher was at best misinformed, a spokesman insisted the trial will go ahead in spite of any objections. "DETR wants these trials to go ahead," he said. "They are the first on this scale which have been done, and it is very important that we get this information."

Friends of the Earth has written to Mr Meacher, calling on him to order the 25-acre crop of spring variety oilseed rape to be ploughed up. Pete Riley, Friends of the Earth food campaigner, said: "The Government must take decisive action

and stop these farm-scale trials until the correct procedures have been followed."

Four such trials are expected, to assess the environmental impact of growing GM herbicide-resistant rape and maize. Another trial will begin near Sharnbury, Oxfordshire, later this month.

Desmond D'Souza, biotechnology director at AgrEvo, said his company acted in good faith when it advertised in the Echo and the company was re-advertising in the Swindon Evening Advertiser in the interests of "openness and transparency". The first adverts appeared yesterday.

"We do not accept that we have breached the laws," he added. "We advertised in good faith in what we believed to be the right paper. The laws state that we must advertise in a local paper within 10 days of consent being applied for from the De-

partment of Environment, Transport and the Regions to go ahead. We did this. We do not accept that we advertised in the wrong publication."

"We will not be harvesting until some time after July. The public still have every opportunity to register objections."

The DETR wants to institute field-scale trials of GM crops as a means of slowing their commercial introduction, thus appeasing pressure groups, while providing a path to their wider use, thus satisfying the companies.

The Cooperative Wholesale Society, the UK's largest farming organisation, has refused to take part in trials.

Thousands of people are expected to march in London today to call on the Government to ban GM food. The protest, organised by GMO Campaign, starts in Hyde Park at 1.30pm and ends at Trafalgar Square.

Teachers to sue over false claims

TEACHERS DEMANDED new safeguards yesterday to protect the "forgotten army" of thousands of staff whose careers were destroyed by false and malicious allegations of physical and sexual abuse by pupils.

The second largest teaching union, the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, called for staff accused of abusing pupils to be granted anonymity and said children who made allegations should be suspended immediately and expelled if the claims proved to be malicious.

Rigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said nearly 1,000 of his members had faced allegations of abuse over the past eight years, but across the profession the figure could be three times as large. Three quarters of the claims were dismissed out of hand and only a tiny number eventually resulted in a conviction.

But he said many staff cleared of wrongdoing suffered wrecked careers and ruined lives. Few could return to school even after being proved innocent and many never worked again, he said. Three union members had committed suicide after facing allegations.

Delegates at the union's annual conference in Eastbourne unanimously backed a call for reform and detailed a catalogue of cases in which malicious allegations had been made against their colleagues.

Mr de Gruchy said the number of false claims was increasing and called for stern action against pupils who invented stories of abuse by staff. He said: "I think it's a very serious case which should normally result in expulsion. Rather like physical assault on other kids or teachers, they have to pay the price and that price is expulsion." He criticised Estelle Morris, the School Standards minister, for failing to back moves to grant

BY BEN RUSSELL
Education Correspondent

anonymity to accused teachers. Mr de Gruchy said staff should enjoy similar protection to that granted to rape and sexual abuse victims. Teachers accused of abuse should not be named until convicted of a crime, he said.

Steve Luscombe, a delegate from London, said in one case a teacher was accused of touching a 15-year-old boy "in a way which could imply a certain sexual innuendo".

The teacher was cleared after investigation "but the pain, indignity and hurt was there. He said, 'I have done all these years in teaching and someone can throw this out at me.' Two terms later he resigned and he is no longer in teaching."

In another case, Mr Luscombe said, a young married junior school teacher suffered a nervous breakdown after being cleared of touching a girl pupil.

Mr Luscombe said: "First day back, the parents waited to collect their children. The hubbub of the parents went silent. Parents withdrew children from school. One said, 'My child is not to go swimming with Mr So-and-so.'"

"A nervous breakdown followed. He could not face it any more and he threw in his resignation. Financial crisis: he could not pay his mortgage. The family was in turmoil, what a trail of sadness." The teacher and his wife later needed medical treatment for depression, he said.

The Government announced the first 21 of its Sure Start projects yesterday to provide children with a better start in life. The projects, directed at disadvantaged areas, offer parents advice and support on health, education and child development.

The first are expected to start in early summer.

Farmer risks jail over right of way

A FARMER who refuses to accept there is a public footpath on his land was told yesterday by a judge to allow rambblers access - or spend 14 days in jail.

The warning was given at Middlesbrough County Court by Judge David Bryant to Stan Bell, 76. Mr Bell, whose family bought North Farm, Hartlepool, Cleveland in 1946, maintains that there is no public right of way on his land.

A 1983 public inquiry ruled the footpath legal but Mr Bell has appeared in court three

BY PAUL WATSON

times since then for obstructing the path. Hartlepool Borough Council obtained a court injunction in January, ordering Mr Bell to remove obstructions. After he still refused, Judge Bryant told him: "You can remove these obstructions and make sure people can walk along this footpath. If they can you will not go to prison, but if they cannot you will go to prison for 14 days." The hearing was adjourned until 28 May.

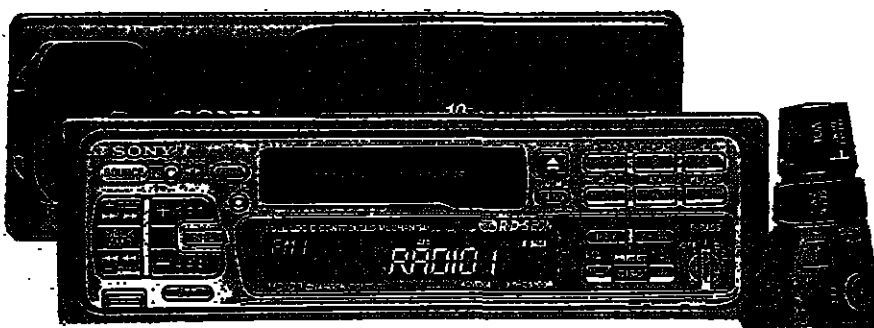
FERGAL KEANE



'Clinton bloody crazy,
Milosevic bloody crazy,
Everybody crazy'

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 3

Serious sounds. Silly prices. (Sale now on.)

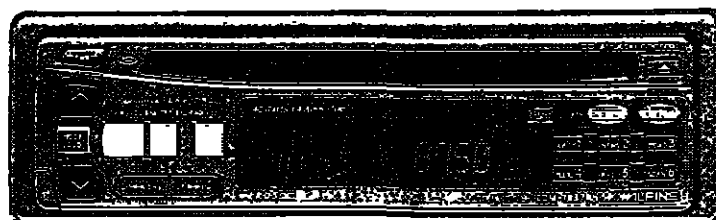


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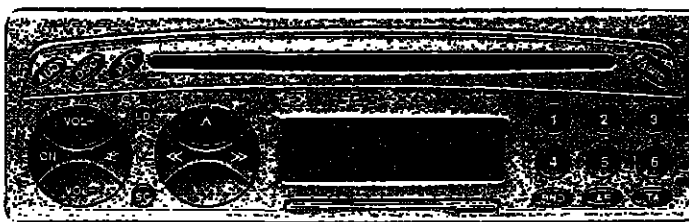
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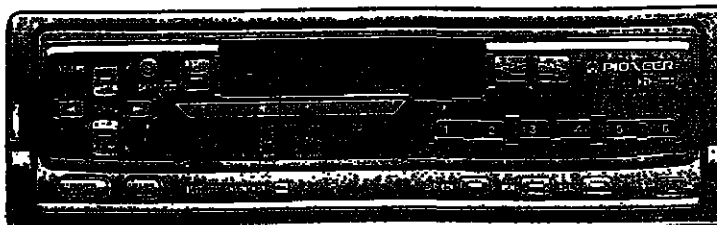
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Last-ditch summit on Ulster arms

NORTHERN IRELAND parties and British and Irish government officials will spend this weekend making final preparations for what promises to be the mother of all negotiating sessions, beginning in Belfast on Tuesday.

Talks are scheduled to resume on that date in an attempt to secure a final settlement of the arms decommissioning issue, in the hope that agreement will lead to the speedy formation of a new Northern Ireland cross-community government.

It was confirmed yesterday that members of the Balcombe Street gang, an IRA unit responsible for multiple killings in England in the 1970s, are being released from prison in the Irish Republic. Four members of the gang have already been freed, and will be formally discharged from prison next week.

With most attention focused

BY DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

on the question of whether the IRA and Sinn Féin will agree to the stipulation that some arms should be "put beyond use", the authorities may be hoping that such moves will help to improve the atmosphere in republican circles.

Gang members have been among the longest-serving republican prisoners, spending 24 years behind bars. Most of their term was served in English jails until their recent transfers to the Irish Republic.

The four men were sentenced to a total of 47 terms of life imprisonment for a number of murders and other offences, with further sentences totalling more than 2,000 years.

In republican circles the men are viewed as strong supporters of the peace process. Their controversial appear-

ance at a Sinn Féin conference a year ago helped to secure an overwhelming vote in favour of republican entry into a Northern Ireland administration.

Next week's talks are seen as possibly the last serious obstacle to the formation of that administration, as all sides grapple with the decommissioning issue.

Although most of the pressure is on the republicans to put arms beyond use, there are also signs of strain within David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party. Two of his assembly backbenchers have indicated their unhappiness with the draft declaration that emerged from the last session of talks at Hillsborough Castle near Belfast.

Sinn Féin has since said that it regards the draft declaration as unacceptable, and will be seeking to make radical changes to it. Martin McGuin-

ness, Sinn Féin's chief negotiator, said yesterday his party was committed to overcoming the peace process deadlock, which he described as "maybe its greatest crisis".

He added: "The mood music out there is very, very bad at the moment. But, that said, I am not disheartened. I am not despondent. There is still a tremendous amount of hope about - a tremendous amount of optimism that all of this can work. What we have to do is get back in there next Tuesday and try and resolve it."

"There is no difficulty in relation to communications between ourselves and the governments. We are not going to run off like spoilt boys with our thumbs in our mouths. What we are going to do is buckle down to the task ahead of us. We are going to work with people in a very determined way to overcome the difficulties."



Patrons drinking in the Wharf Street pub in Leeds, which has been designed by women for women. *Gazette*

Ladies call time on lads' pubs

BY ESTHER LEACH

"SO WHERE'S the pool table then," said one lad as he looked around the pub designed by women for women.

The pub's owner, the drinks giant Allied Domecq, asked its women employees to create their idea of a perfect place for a woman to have a drink on her own without feeling intimidated. After two years of planning, the Wharf Street pub, in Wellington Street, Leeds, once a place for hard-drinking men, is now a female den.

"It's a bit lighter and more open," said Damien Hawke, 21, a student. "But I don't like the idea of women isolating themselves, sitting together in their own little cells."

But would a woman on her own feel comfortable enough to drop in at Wharf Street and order a drink?

"I don't usually go anywhere on my own," said Emily Parry, 18, an office worker from Leeds. "Normally I would wait outside a pub for my friends before going in but I suppose I wouldn't feel uncomfortable waiting on my own in here. It's friendly enough, nice and bright, peaceful with a nice atmosphere."

Her friend Carolyn Kelly, 25, said she didn't think it was a lads' pub. "The decor is just too nice. I could bring my mum here and she doesn't like pubs."

Sharon Rice, 37, a police officer from Sheffield, said the pub didn't seem a place for posers or a bar for the lads.

"I am quite used to going into a place on my own, that wouldn't bother me, but I just hope the prices aren't too high that they exclude ordinary working-class women."

"Having women's maga-

zines is a nice idea," said Sarah Coyne, 26, a project controller with a finance company. "If you're on your own you could flip through a mag and not feel awkward."

How does the landlord, Jason Argyle, 29, welcome a woman on her own?

"By making her feel she's not on her own but part of the party. The trick is not to make her feel different because she is alone. How we do that is our little secret."

But there is no intention to ignore men, says Allied Domecq. "Pubs can be intimidating places for women but we have tried to design out the elements which traditionally put them off."

"We wanted to offer women a pub environment in which they felt welcome, comfortable and above all safe."

"The windows are bigger than in most pubs so people can see what's going on inside, the lighting is very good, there is waiter service so women don't have to join the scrum at the bar and there are decent toilets."

"The place is bright and open, the decor warm and friendly. There are chairs with backs so people feel they are protected - and the staff have been trained to make everyone feel welcome."

Christopher Bates, a 20-year-old geography student, had just one complaint.

"The waiter service makes a difference," he said, "but one of the best ways of meeting a woman is rubbing shoulders when you're ordering drinks at the bar."

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Finally, a nation can sing 'This land is our land'

WEEK IN THE LIFE TEMAN AVINGAQ, AN INUIT

THE SPARKLE in the Arctic sky is not the Northern Lights but a firework show. There is the promise of dancing until dawn. Along the frozen shore of Fox Basin everyone from the settlement of Igloodik has gathered. Such frivolity is rare in a community that is an aircraft flight from anywhere.

Temán Avingaq watches with his girlfriend, Ronda, as a green trail arcs over the wooden houses, which are perched on piles clear of the permafrost and snowdrifts. A starburst picks out fishing boats in the harbour. A week of festivities on the ice is Igloodik's way of marking a new beginning in the lives of the Inuit. It is the end of a 30-year legal and political struggle to control the vast wasteland in Canada, which will be called Nunavut, "Our Land", in the Inuit language. It is the beginning, Temán wants to believe, of a time when a people who lost their way after Canada colonised them can feel at home again.

On Sunday Temán takes time off from his three jobs - as a hunter, a carpenter and a radio-show host - to go with Ronda, their two daughters and their son to a feast for Nunavut. "We call it country food," he says. "Caribou, seal, walrus - the animals we have always caught." They travel on a not very traditional Japanese snowmobile, or skidoo. Temán admits: "It would be

hard for people here to go anywhere without a skidoo."

There is also church to attend. Temán walks to service with his father, Jacob, who preaches at the hut with a bell-tower - Igloodik's Protestant chapel. When the missionaries first arrived two churches were built. Protestant and Catholics competed to convert those such as Temán's father who had been forced to stop their nomadic life, roaming after the caribou herds. The Protestant missionary converted those one side of the main street, the Catholic those the other side. Then both discouraged their congregations from mixing.

The next day Temán had planned to complete a carpentry contract at the school but it may not be possible. "The school classroom has to have a door. We have no trees. So the door has to be flown up. Now they say it's not on today's plane." Nunavut's fledgling economy must grow to provide work here. Half the Inuit are unemployed. Temán is realistic: "I think the delegates we now have in our assembly will know about things better and try harder. But Canada will still have to help us, help us a lot."

On Tuesday the classroom door arrives and the weather is right to install it. "This is a beautiful day for April - a warm one," Temán says. The temperature is minus 20C. Often in April



Temán Avingaq (left) and the igloo he and his brother Ike built to sleep in after a hunt on the ice floes for seal and walrus



Mark McCauley

doorways cannot be left open to work on and fingers can freeze to the handles of saws and screwdrivers.

Jacob has spent the day exhibiting the seal hunting tools, once the only trade that sustained Inuit families. Back home he talks to Temán, who has decided to head off tomorrow for the edge of the sea-ice. "The wind should come from the south," father advises son. "A south wind is a good wind for walrus." The following day the wind and the advice prove

sound. Temán and his brother-in-law Ike swathe themselves in skins - caribou coats, husky fur trousers and sealskin boots - and harness sled to skidoo for the run to the ice floe edge. They shoot a seal, harpoon it to haul it in and skin it efficiently on the ice. It is a matter-of-fact process. The intestines, a particular delicacy, are stripped out and neatly plated. A walrus, too slow to notice their presence, is killed. Its tusks are cut off. "A carver might take them," Temán says. "We have been

lucky. There's a lot of meat here and this is still the best food we get to eat. The packets and the frozen goods we buy from the store cost so much." As darkness descends, Temán and Ike build an igloo in an hour. This is the best, the only shelter for an Arctic night. The hunters are at peace.

On Thursday Temán takes Ronda to a meeting of the settlement's Alcohol Licensing Committee, which she chairs. Many Inuit drift into drink as their early ambitions are dis-

appointed. There are no bars and no off-sales of spirits in Igloodik. Any resident who wants to drink must apply to have it flown up monthly. Their requests are scrutinised bottle by bottle, can by can. They are frequently refused.

Temán goes on to the third of his jobs where he tackles another social dilemma. "I do a talk show on community radio," he explains. "It's in our own language of course. But we are talking about our language too." The new Nunavut As-

sembly will conduct the territory's affairs in the Inuit language, Inuktitut. One question is whether children should learn it for longer. "Many jobs have to be done in English," Temán says. "Our children have to be perfect in both."

At the weekend the official celebrations are over. Temán and his family gather. The children chew the dark fibrous meat from ribs of boiled seal. Their grandparents slice raw flesh and liver from the carcass of the animal that has been de-

frosting in the house since it was brought back from the ice floe. Temán picks from one pot and then the other. He smiles as he acknowledges the parallel. "We have a foot in both worlds as Inuit. We cannot only be a part of the world we once had." Temán's son suddenly squeals and holds out a milk tooth. A seal rib has proved too tough. His grandfather tells him: "You will need stronger teeth for the walrus." Mike Doherty is a BBC News Correspondent.

Goatherds hit hard by row over bananas

THEY DON'T eat bananas on the Mongolian grasslands. But as the traditional nomadic herders shelter in isolated tents against the long winter, a tit-for-tat American-European trade dispute over the sub-tropical fruit is threatening the subsistence livelihoods of those who provide one-third of the world's cashmere.

Few nomads know that a US-Brussels argument over banana imports will hit life on the steppes. "I hadn't heard about the trade dispute," said Sereeter, a 40-year-old goatherd from Tuv province who sells his cashmere at the raw materials market in Ulan Bator. "I think it may cause some effect, but I do not know whether it will be positive or negative."

In the next few weeks, as the goats start moulting their winter growth, the herders will begin cutting the raw "greasy" cashmere that is destined to end up as luxury-priced sweaters and scarves on the other side of the world. But it is not clear who will be buying their wool. While attention has so far focused on the Scottish cashmere industry, the impoverished Mongolian nomads also look like being innocent victims of the "banana wars" because of a World Trade Organisation ruling this week that gave Washington the right to impose punitive 100 per cent import tariffs on \$191m (£118m) of European imports. On the threatened list of goods are cashmere products, many manufactured with Mongolian wool.

"The impact on the Mongolian herder unfortunately will be most extreme," said Ronnie Lamb in Ulan Bator, the executive director of Mongol Amicale, a US-Mongolian joint venture that last year processed 300 tons of cashmere, a large proportion for export to Italian companies, which re-exported finished fashion goods to the US. "Most of the Mongolian herdersmen here live below a sustainable level. They come

By TERESA POOLE
in Peking



Mongolian goats produce 2,500 tons of wool a year

out of a long, cold, hard winter and they have no savings, they have no contingencies, no reserves, they need to eat, they need to survive, and send their children to school and to clothe themselves." Mr Lamb, a Scotsman, splits his time between Mongolia and his company's Bradford firm, which sells on cashmere to end-users.

Mongol Amicale buys its cashmere direct from the herders, but Mr Lamb said the company might hold off on some spring purchases until the outcome of the trade dispute was clear. "We've no idea that contracts we have in hand are actually going to be honoured."

It is a potentially disastrous situation for nomadic herders in one of the most isolated and extreme geographical regions on earth, where winter temperatures fall to minus 40C. And it is a "double whammy," said Mr Lamb, for the industry. Last year, the world cashmere price collapsed, with herdersmen receiving just \$9 a kilogram - half the level of 1994-95 - because sales of cashmere clothes plummeted in Japan and South-east

Asia, hard hit by the area's economic crisis. With the "banana wars", Mongolian cashmere sales to clothing manufacturers in Scotland and Italy are also in danger of evaporating, because the punitive tariffs will make European-made sweaters and scarves unsellable across the Atlantic.

"It's a disaster for Mongolia," said John Napoleoni, chief financial officer for Fortecashmere, a US firm that processes raw cashmere in Ulan Bator. Cashmere is the country's second biggest foreign exchange earner, and Mongolia an ill-afforded another economic shock. The country, for seven decades a Soviet satellite state, was left reeling in the early Nineties when Moscow's subsidies disappeared overnight.

Sereeter, who like most Mongolians uses one name added: "Herdersmen with many animals live quite wealthy, selling meat, skins and cashmere. But the life of herdersmen with fewer numbers of livestock is not that good... Animal husbandry is a risky business; harsh weather can kill your animals, or you have to slaughter them to get cash and food and clothing."

The ultra-soft cashmere fibres are a precious commodity in the West, but most herders have little notion of the price of the finished products. With each animal yielding just 200g to 300g of cashmere a year, Mongolia's 11 million goats will this year produce around 2,500 tons of the raw wool. About 90 per cent of Mongolia's cashmere wool is exported.

At worst, the "banana wars" may play into the hands of aggressive Chinese traders and smugglers, who tend to outwit the herders on price. "The Chinese may be loading their wagons anticipating a great windfall because the European manufacturers are out of the ballpark," said Mr Napoleoni. Additional reporting from Enkhmangalan in Ulan Bator.

US detainees torture claim

THREE AMERICANS held in Zimbabwe on charges of terrorism, espionage and sabotage said yesterday that they were being treated inhumanely, were forced to sleep naked and were shackled in small cells lit round the clock.

At a remand hearing at Harare magistrates' court, Jeremy Callow, lawyer for the defence, alleged in a report that the three Americans were being held in solitary confine-

By CRIS CHINKA
in Harare

ment in windowless single cells and without the right to take any exercise.

John Dixon Lamonte, 35, Gary George Blanchard, 35, and Joseph Wendell Pettijohn, 34, were arrested at Harare airport on 7 March for illegal possession of arms. They said at their first court appearance, on 13 March, that they had suf-

fered torture, including electric shocks to the genitals.

Yesterday, Mr Callow gave more details of the three men's alleged torture, saying his clients had been forced to display their sexual organs, simulate love-making and had been threatened with sodomy and death.

The three were remanded in custody until 23 April. They face maximum sentences of life in prison if convicted.

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INDEPENDENT
Saturday 10 April 1999

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BUSINESS

Barclaycard forced to cut rates as market share falls

BY ANDREW VERITY

BARCLAYCARD, the UK's biggest credit-card provider, is cutting its main interest rate to under 20 per cent for the first time in a move that reflects the increasing damage inflicted on its business by low-cost competitors.

The wholly-owned subsidiary of the Barclays group said it would cut its headline annual rate of interest to 19.9 per cent, a 3 per cent drop from its level six months ago.

The company is also launching a package of added benefits, including savings of up to 30 per cent on home phone calls, and a free extended warranty for household appliances bought with its card. It is also launching a Platinum card offering enhanced benefits for high earning customers.

The move drew immediate attacks from its competitors,

HOW CREDIT CARD RATES COMPARE									
	Barclaycard	NatWest Combined a/c	Midland MasterCard/Visa	Lloyds MasterCard	MBNA	Goldfish	RBS Advanta	Alliance & Leicester MoneyBack	
APR purchases %	16.9-19.9	21.4	21.5	16.8-22.2	19.9	19.8	17.9	17.4	
Hidden charges									
Late Payment	nil	£10	nil	£10	£15	£12	£10	£12	
Exceeding limit	nil	£15	nil	£10	£15	£12	£10	£12	
Unpaid direct debit	nil	£5	£5	£5	£15	£12	£10	£8	

Source: Barclaycard/Moneyfacts/Comptometer literature 31.3.99

which have continually savaged Barclaycard for making excessive profits and charging an annual interest rate of more than 20 per cent.

Low-cost competitors, many of them new entrants to the market from the United States, have succeeded in capturing an increasing share of the booming market by offering interest rates of a fraction of Barclaycard's. Competitors such as Capital One, a US credit-card

suer, are now offering rates as low as 11.9 per cent. Rivals such as RBS Advanta, a joint venture between Royal Bank of Scotland and the credit-card issuer Advanta, are also luring customers away. They offer to take on Barclaycard debts at a starting rate of just 6.9 per cent.

The move represents a dramatic reversal of strategy for Barclaycard. Until recently its managers have resisted cutting rates, arguing that customers

would be attracted by added extras such as warranties. In the City the strategy is widely perceived to have failed. Barclaycard's market share, which stood at 32 per cent two years ago, has now shrunk to around 28 per cent.

The company has still grown its business because the market for cards is expanding by 15 to 20 per cent a year. But last September it announced it was slashing 1,100 jobs, out of a staff

of 5,000, because of new technology and the need to cut costs. John Eaton, managing director of Barclaycard, said: "I would accept the point that people have challenged us on value. I don't generally believe businesses should build their strategies around market share alone, but we did of course take that into account. We are not going to be seen in the same light as the other traditional

banks." He said the bank was also cutting out hidden charges such as penalties for late payment and exceeding card credit limits.

The City yesterday said the move had been forced on Barclaycard by the competition. Inigo Edsberg, a senior analyst at WestLB Panmure, said: "This is purely a defensive move. And ultimately the profitability of Barclaycard will fall, as it should do because it is far too profitable."

Competitors were quick to strike back. Mark Austin, marketing manager of RBS Advanta, said: "While we welcome Barclaycard's attempt to keep pace with other issuers by chipping away at their rate, consumers shouldn't have to wait. Millions can still reduce their bill by around two thirds, simply by switching cards."

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BRIEFING

NatPower welcomes Byers ruling

NATIONAL POWER yesterday welcomed the Government's decision not to refer its purchase of Midlands Electricity's supply business to the Competition Commission provided suitable undertakings, including the sale of its 4GW coal-fired power station at Drax, were obtained. Although the director general of energy supply recommended National Power dispose of some 5.5-6 GW capacity, Stephen Byers, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, ruled that the disposal of the Drax plant, which National Power has put up for sale, would help to reduce its influence in the generation market enough. National Power's shares yesterday closed up 3p at 485.5p.

Tracker rides high on MBO offer

SHARES IN car security company Tracker Network jumped 23 per cent to 645p yesterday after the company said it had received a management buyout offer.

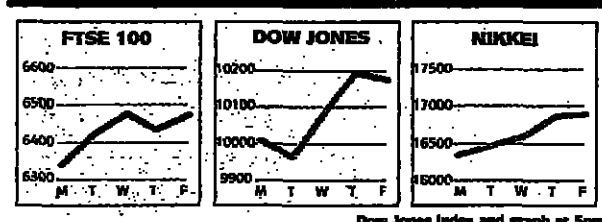
Tracker, which provides electronic systems allowing vehicles to be traced if they are stolen, said it had received an indicative offer of 670p a share, valuing the company at around £37m.

Avonside looks at private benefits

AVONSIDE YESTERDAY joined the growing list of smaller companies turning private, announcing it had agreed a £22.58m, 55p a share cash bid from Novaside, a company set up by Craig Slater, one of its directors, and venture capitalists Alchemy Partners. Novaside said it had received irrevocable undertakings in respect of 0.30 per cent of the capital to accept the offer, which represents a premium of 37.5 per cent to Avonside's share price the day before it confirmed it had been approached.

Both sides said the privatisation would remove the financial, managerial and regulatory burdens of being a listed company and enhance Avonside's ability to respond to opportunities and market demands quickly.

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	6472.80	34.90	0.54	6496.10	4599.20	2.42
FTSE 250	5563.50	-49.50	-0.90	5970.90	4247.60	3.19
FTSE 350	3069.90	18.20	0.60	3073.90	2210.40	2.54
FTSE All Share	2668.70	16.95	0.57	2921.20	2143.33	2.58
FTSE SmallCap	2423.30	2.50	0.11	2793.80	1834.40	3.56
FTSE Fledgling	1320.30	3.80	0.29	1517.10	1046.20	3.94
FTSE AIM	873.30	3.00	0.35	1146.90	761.30	1.18
FTSE Europe 100	3003.75	16.69	0.56	3079.27	2018.15	1.93
FTSE Europe 300	1284.54	9.97	0.78	1332.07	880.63	1.87
Dow Jones	10169.95	30.52	0.30	10209.08	7400.30	1.56
Nikkei	16853.63	63.94	0.38	16855.66	12787.90	0.76
Hang Seng	11914.10	18.35	0.15	11960.34	6444.79	2.57
Dax	5124.18	55.43	1.08	6217.83	3833.71	1.60
S&P 500	1344.02	-0.91	-0.07	1344.08	923.32	1.20
Nasdaq	2584.02	5.24	0.20	2596.25	1357.09	0.28
Toronto 300	5895.40	-40.90	-0.69	7837.70	3320.90	1.52
Brazil Ibovespa	11361.87	-148.65	-1.30	12393.14	4575.69	3.14
Belgium Be10	3330.59	9.18	0.28	3713.21	2656.26	1.98
Australian All Ordinaries	5327.73	10.00	0.19	5665.98	3465.98	1.86
France CAC 40	4263.14	32.44	0.75	4604.84	2881.21	1.86
Milan MBM30	5676.00	-392.00	-0.69	8917.00	24173.00	1.02
Irish ISEQ 35	10101.90	1.30	0.01	10989.80	6869.90	1.73
Madrid Ibex 35	5356.91	-22.41	-0.42	5581.70	3732.57	1.55
S Korea Comp	687.42	6.23	0.92	690.52	277.37	1.00
Australia ASX	3060.00	3.80	0.12	3061.60	2386.70	3.03

INTEREST RATES			US LONG BOND		
SHORT STERLING	UK 10 YEAR GILT		5.00		
5.00	4.50		5.00		
4.95	4.40		5.00		
			5.00		

MONEY MARKET RATES			BOND YIELDS		
Index	3 month	5 year	10 year	15 year	20 year
UK	5.31	-2.24	5.25	-2.29	4.39
US	5.00	-0.66	5.21	-0.57	5.09
Japan	0.17	-0.51	0.23	-0.47	1.62
Germany	2.66	-0.97	2.72	-1.20	3.85

CURRENCIES			DOLLAR		
S/E	G/E	N/E	1.00		
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		
1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		

POUND			DOLLAR		
Index	3 month	5 year	10 year	15 year	20 year
UK	1.6087	+0.0051	1.6089	0.6216	-0.02p
US	1.6087	+0.0051	1.6089	0.6216	-0.02p
Japan	194.74	+0.0037	219.00	131.48	
Germany	102.60	+0.0010	107.30	109.30	

OTHER INDICATORS			GDP		
Index	3 month	5 year	10 year	15 year	20 year
UK	1.434	-0.63	-13.05	115.40	3.00
US	280.95	-1.10	308.45	163.70	2.10
Japan	4.92	-0.06	6.41	5.25	7.25

Source: Bloomberg

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.4594	Mexican (nuevo peso)	13.88
Austria (schillings)	19.70	Netherlands (guilder)	3.1618
Belgium (francs)	58.02	New Zealand (\$)	2.8859
Canada (\$)	2.3842	Norway (krone)	12.13
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8278	Portugal (escudos)	286.32
Denmark (krone)	10.72	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.8502
Finland (markka)	8.5952	Singapore (\$)	2.6576
France (francs)	9.4061	South Africa (rand)	9.5675
Germany (mark)	2.8155	Spain (pesetas)	238.12
Greece (drachma)	464.90	Sweden (kronor)	12.94
Hong Kong (\$)	12.00	Switzerland (francs)	2.3060
Ireland (pounds)	1.1291	Thailand (bahts)	56.03
India (rupees)	61.54	Turkey (liras)	580343
Israel (shekels)	5.9623	USA (\$)	1.5605
Italy (lira)	2793		
Japan (yen)	189.29		
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.8511		
Malta (lira)	0.6138		

Notes for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

String of closures leads to loss of 3,000 jobs

BY NIGEL COPE
Associate City Editor

BRITAIN'S RISING jobless total was placed under further pressure yesterday with a string of factory and office closures that will lead to 3,000 redundancies.

Kvaerner, the Norwegian construction group, led the way, with reports that it is planning to restructure its UK operations with the possible loss of 2,000 jobs at its shipyards in Scotland. The company has called a news conference on Tuesday to unveil a new strategy and structure, but Kvaerner refused to say whether this includes job cuts.

Elsewhere there was a new setback for Britain's mining industry when RJB Mining announced plans to close its colliery in Calverton, Nottingham, with the loss of 300 jobs. RJB said the higher costs associated with accessing new coal seams were responsible for the decision, with "ongoing operations no longer viable". Production will cease next week, with only



Colin Richardson, one of 300 Calverton miners told yesterday of the loss of their jobs

about 40 men kept to secure underground areas and recover equipment. The miners will receive three months' redundancy money plus payments based on length of service.

Calverton was closed by British Coal in 1993 and reopened by RJB the year after. The company said it had considered a substantial investment

in accessing a deeper seam with 30 million tonnes of recoverable coal, but the reserves have a higher sulphur content for which there is no market.

Arjo Wiggins Appleton, the paper group, is closing its Cardiff plant with the loss of 460 jobs. Arjo is restructuring its carbonless and thermal papers

operations and terminating thermal production in Europe. With the closure of the Cardiff carbonless plant, the manufacture of these products will be concentrated at Fort William in Scotland and Darford, Kent, as well as at two plants in Belgium. A plant in France is also closing down.

At Sainsbury's, the super-

market group described as "speculation" reports that it plans to close its Savacentre head office with the loss of 300 jobs.

The company has been reviewing the Savacentre business and said it would inform staff at the office in Wokingham, Berkshire, of the outcome on Monday.

Water groups defy price cut demand

BY ANDREW VERITY

THREE of the UK's biggest water companies yesterday threw down the gauntlet in their battle with the water regulator, Ofwat, over the amount they can charge customers for the next five years. Only one, Thames Water, is proposing a cut in bills.

Thames, the country's largest water and sewerage company, proposed cutting bills by 5 per cent in the year 2000, taking £10 off the average bill of £205. But it wants bills to rise by 2.5 per cent above inflation in the succeeding four years.

Scottish Power, owner of Southern Water, brushed aside demands for a cut, proposing to raise bills 3.5 per cent next year and 3 per cent above inflation until 2005. Bristol Water wants an initial rise in real terms of 1.5 per cent next year and 1 per cent each year until 2005.

The proposals are in stark contrast to demands for hefty price cuts from Ian Hyatt, director-general of Ofwat, last October. In Southern's case, he wanted a 17.5 per cent price cut next year.

Nigel Hawkins, utilities analyst at Williams de Broe, said: "There's a gap between the proposals of Ofwat and Thames Water, but with Scottish Power it's more like a chasm."

All water companies have been told to hand Ofwat their proposals for cutting bills while paying out for major environmental improvements demanded by the Government. "Our plan will provide greater environmental improvements and deliver a stable price regime over the entire price control period in line with our customers' preferences," said Ian Russell, chairman of Southern Water.

Mr Hyatt has indicated he is likely to soften his proposals because of the scale of investment the water companies will have to make under the Government's environmental programme.

Thames Water is planning to invest £2.5bn to enhance the taste and appearance of drinking water, and to improve effluent flowing into shallow rivers.

No board bust-up, insists Reg Vardy

BY NIGEL COPE

REG VARDY, the Sunderland-based car dealer, denied there had been a boardroom bust-up yesterday as he announced the resignation of chief executive, Graeme Potts.

The company said Mr Potts, 41, was leaving to take up a position in the car industry and that his departure was "entirely amicable." However, he will be eligible for compensation for loss of office under the terms of his 12-month contract, which last year paid him £290,000.

"There is no question of a bust-up," Mr Peter Vardy, the chairman, said. "I have known Graeme for years and I wish he'd stay forever. But he has been here 15 years and feels it is time to move on."

The company has courted

further controversy with the announcement that Mr Vardy, who owns 30 per cent of the company, will add the chief executive's position to his responsibilities as chairman.

Mr Vardy denied that the company was flouting corporate governance best practice by allowing him to combine the two top roles. He said the balance of power would be maintained by the promotion of Robert Dickinson, a non-executive director, to non-executive deputy chairman.

In a current trading statement, Reg Vardy said trading had been strong this year and sales in March, when the new T registration was introduced, were particularly buoyant.

Football shares slide as Sky is kicked into touch

BY ANDREW GARFIELD
Financial Editor

SHARES IN Britain's largest quoted football clubs fell sharply yesterday after the Government blocked British Sky Broadcasting's £523m takeover of Manchester United and referred cable operator NTL's bid for Newcastle United to the new Competition Commission.

Analysts said the two decisions appeared to rule out any further bids by media groups for UK clubs, removing the takeover speculation that has buoyed the sector since Sky's bid was unveiled in September.

As well as Manchester United, which fell 32.5p to 186p, and Newcastle United, which was down 9.5p to 76p, Aston Villa - which may have expected a bid from Carlton if the Manchester United bid had gone through - also saw its shares fall

by 47.5p to 515p. Tottenham Hotspur, whose chairman Alan Sugar has rebuffed several approaches from Enic, the Joe Lewis-backed leisure group, fell 3p to 76p, while Leeds Sport fell 2p to 20p. Shares in smaller clubs, seen as less likely to be taken over by media interests, were less badly hit. Nottingham Forest, struggling to avoid relegation, rose 1p to 25p, while Loftus Road, owner of Fulham, was static at 9p.

Tony Fraher, who manages the Singer & Friedlander's football fund, one of few City vehicles for football club investors, said the City clearly thought yesterday's decisions had put paid to hopes of a bid

frenzy in the football sector. However, he said in the longer run, by blocking Sky the Government may have inadvertently opened the way to a higher bid by a continental European club, which it might find harder to oppose. France's Canal Plus owns Paris Saint-Germain, while Mediaset, Silvio Berlusconi's television empire, owns FC Milan.

"If Mediaset were to bid for United, there would be nothing to stop Sky bidding for Mediaset. The EU has not shown any inclination to stop media companies taking over football clubs. I don't regard this as bad news. Murdoch was getting United without any competition. I have no doubt there will be another bid," said Mr Fraher.

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AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

THE FTSE 100 finished just below its closing high but set another trading high. The index topped 6,500 for the first time; it ended 34.9 up at 6,472.8. Supporting shares were also ahead.

Thursday's base-rate cuts helped interest-sensitive shares such as retailers and property. Kingfisher moved to a new high, gaining 38.5p to 890p, and Land Securities rose 24.5p to 840p. Strong figures from Sun Life & Provincial boosted insurance.

Derek Pain, page 19

NEW YORK

BLUE CHIPS sank as profit taking set in after three record-breaking sessions this week. The Dow average was down 53 points to 10,144 in the early afternoon. "It is Friday, so maybe they are cashing in," said Larry Wachtel at Prudential Securities.

Analysts said stocks received an early boost from news that US wholesale prices rose by just 0.2 per cent in March despite higher oil prices. But this was not sufficient to quell the bout of profit taking.

TOKYO

THE NIKKEI 225 closed flat as investors took profits after it surged past 17,000 in the morning for the first time since 30 March last year, traders said. At the close, the Nikkei was 8.94 points, 0.05 per cent, up at 16,855.63. June Nikkei futures stood 70 points higher at 16,850.

The index leapt above 17,000 after a record close in New York fuelled hopes of a global rally, and as sharp interest-rate cuts in the euro zone led to talk that investors would look to shift funds to Japan.

HONG KONG

THE HANG SENG Index closed up 186.26 points at 11,914.10, another year's high, on expectations of local interest rate cuts following Thursday's cuts in Europe. Key rates were cut by 0.25 per cent to 8.50 per cent after the market closed.

Traders said the market appeared to well supported at its current levels despite the weak economic fundamentals, and that next week should see the Hang Seng index test the 12,000-point level.

FRANKFURT

SHARES CLOSED on the back of Thursday's euro rate cut, with more foreign investors trading on the German market. The Xetra DAX closed at 5,133.92, up 66.16, while the floor DAX ended at 5,124.18, up 55.43. Traders said the market lost some of its optimism on reports that Russia was targeting missiles at some European countries.

BASF closed up 6.78 per cent, and Bayer up 3.43 per cent, after several banks issued strong recommendations.

Football and business don't mix

THE FINDINGS of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission against BSkyB are so unequivocal that it seems hard to believe any merger between a broadcaster and a Premier League football club will now be allowed to go ahead. The Commission's principal concern was that Sky's takeover of Manchester United would adversely affect competition between broadcasters for TV rights. But to this, the Commission added a second, more general concern - that the merger would "damage the quality of British football" by reinforcing the division between larger, richer clubs and smaller, poorer ones.

The rights and wrongs of these conclusions are for others to debate. The effect, however, is significantly to reduce the commercial and investment potential of football. That there was ever anything to be had in this department was, perhaps, always something of an illusion.

As businesses, football clubs tend to be badly, sometimes corruptly, managed organisations which neither abide by, nor aspire to, the usual rules of publicly quoted companies. Often they struggle to make a profit, let alone a decent return. Because success on the pitch is regarded as

past. This applies not just to those clubs immediately affected by the rulings - Manchester United and Newcastle United - but to the broad mass of other quoted football clubs too. Unbundling the Premier League cartel, allowing clubs to sell TV rights individually, perhaps through pay-per-view, could help the game financially, but the benefit will again be confined largely to the top clubs.

Investors were chasing a mirage when they piled into these companies. The MMC has spelt this out in black and white. It is apparently perfectly all right for broadcasters to own and generate their own content when it comes to news, drama and popular entertainment. But when it comes to sport, forget it. For sport, it seems, different rules apply. The same might be said about sport and stock market investment. The two of them just don't seem to mix.

There is little to differentiate the two, apart from the fact that one is better known than the other.

That, in a nutshell, is the problem faced by Barclaycard, which announced yesterday that it is cutting the rate it charges holders of its card by 1 per cent from its previously extortionate levels. The news, while no doubt welcome to Barclaycard's seven million customers, is unlikely to reverse the growing trend towards cheaper and more competitive issuers.

Whereas even a decade ago, Barclaycard's dominance of the market meant huge profits for its parent, Barclays Bank, the same no longer applies today.

Advances in technology make it far easier for new entrants to deliver competitive products. In the past three or four years a clutch of new issuers, particularly from the US, have launched cards which charge as little as half the amount Barclaycard does.

In the past, Barclaycard could point to the fact that the vast majority of its cardholders, two-thirds or more, paid off their debts at the end of each month. They therefore incurred no charges, extortionate or otherwise, and the meantime ben-

efited from Barclaycard's loyalty points system.

But times have changed. Surveys show that the proportion of cardholders who pay their debts off in full each month has dropped to 50 per cent. Up to a quarter carry their balance (another name for debt) indefinitely, making minimum payments and rolling over the rest. Users' increased willingness to manage rather than pay off their card debt means low-charging issuers are bound to become winners in the credit card war.

Barclaycard has applied all the usual tricks to inspire loyalty, but in the end the offer of a free toaster to those silly enough to run up debts of £3,000 on their credit card won't help much if such a debtor is paying £300 a year more than he or she needs to for the loan.

Moreover, whereas once upon a time a Barclaycard was one of the few means available to pay for something in a shop without cash, the same no longer applies today.

Debit cards which simply deduct the money from a bank account are now commonplace. Flexible mortgages, particularly those which come as part and parcel of a bank account, complete with credit card

linked to the prevailing mortgage rate, are growing in popularity.

The fragmentation of the credit market means greater competition and lower profits for everyone, including Barclaycard. Its inability to respond in time has already led to 1,500 redundancies for its staff in the past few months and a slump in market share. Yesterday's rate cut will do little to halt the erosion in Barclaycard's position. It was both too little and too late.

strategy for 3i by refusing to come up with the knockout bid the market wanted to see. If he pulls it off, he will look very clever. But Electra shareholders should think long and hard before accepting his mix of cash and 3i shares.

Until the Inland Revenue holed Electra's defence earlier this week by ruling that the taxman was entitled to a share of Electra's planned £544m buyback, Michael Stoddard and his team seemed to have the better of the play.

Electra's shareholders would plainly have been best served if they had been offered a similar reconstruction plan at a much earlier stage. As it is, it had to be coaxed out of Mr Stoddard, under threat of a hostile bid. Even so, he has demonstrated considerable value locked up in Electra's portfolio of unquoted investments, and the scheme Electra is putting in place gives management all the incentive it needs to realise that value within a realistic time-frame.

Shareholders who reject bids and put their faith in promises from management to do better are frequently disappointed. But in this case, shareholders ought to vote yes to Electra's defence and say no to 3i.

OUTLOOK



a greater priority than the quality of the accounts, any surplus funds tend invariably to be ploughed back into ever more expensive players.

It is often said that Sky's deal with the Premiership has transformed the finances of the game. The reality is that it has transformed the pockets of its leading players. With few exceptions, the financial strength of the clubs has hardly improved at all, despite all Rupert Murdoch's money.

The upshot is that the great bulk of these companies are not worth what they sell for. Certainly, present valuations seem hard to justify if bids by broadcasters are now to be ruled out of court, confining these clubs to their cash starved, uncommercial

Credit cards

YOUR STARTER FOR 10. You have a choice of two credit cards: one, from Capital One Bank, levies a fee of 11.9 per cent APR on its accounts. The other, from Barclaycard, charges 19.9 per cent APR. Other-

AstraZeneca gets a headache as Footsie rolls on

IT'S BEEN a cold turkey week for AstraZeneca, the new Anglo-Swedish drugs giant. After riding on a high as the multi-billion pound merger was put to bed, the shares have suffered with investors snatching their profits.

They have fallen every day since the merged group arrived on Tuesday. Another 45p (after 82p) to 2.77p was chipped away yesterday, bringing the decline to more than 250p.

They say in the market that it is often better to travel than to arrive, and AstraZeneca's fall from its 3,037p peak would appear to support the traditional adage.

There are suggestions, so far unconfirmed, that much of the selling has come from Sweden where there was a high-profile campaign against the deal. But despite the ferocity of the opposition it attracted little support, with fewer than 4 per cent of Astra shareholders failing to back the merger.

The drugs giant's latest weakness occurred as Footsie experienced a rollercoaster session, ending 34.9 points higher at 6,472.8 after hitting a trading high of 6,512.1. Supporting shares also moved ahead.

The latest Monetary Policy Committee base-rate cut had little immediate impact, but the surprise European Central

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stinent Newcastle United suffered a 9.5p reverse to 75.5p as the proposed takeover by the NTL media group was referred to the new Competition Commission.

The Byers whistle-blowing left the rest of the football players looking as sick as the proverbial parrot. Aston Villa fell by 47.5p to 480p and Leeds Sporting 2p to 20.75p. Chelsea Village lost 2p to 74.5p.

National Power, however, brightened up 3.5p to 486p despite a Westminster threat to block its takeover of Midlands

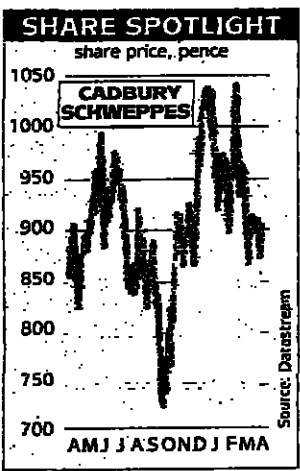
and Norwich Union, the insurer, firmed 3.5p to 451.5p with HSBC signalling a 510p target. Standard Chartered, the banking group, added 55.5p to 1,013.5p after Morgan Stanley raised its target price to 1,180p from 1,050p.

Other insurance shares received a boost from Sun Life & Provincial, which produced an unexpectedly sharp new business increase. Sun Life jumped 27p to 543.5p, offering a helping hand to Prudential, up 31p to 848.5p, and Legal & General, up 37p to 783p.

P&O floated 52.5p higher to 978p following an upbeat statement on the performance of its cruise fleet.

Arjo Wiggins Appleton restructuring pushed the shares 18.5p higher to 163.5p. The AWA shake up, together with signs that the paper and packaging industry could be coming out of the doldrums, helped David S Smith to achieve a 3p gain to 113.5p. Low & Bonar, where there is talk of a confidential bid, firmed 3p to 182.5p and Rexam 1.5p to 202.5p.

Tracker Network, the vehicle security group, motored 120p (after 172.5p) ahead to 645p when the management indicated it would bid 670p a share. Goldsmiths, the jew-



Electricity unless it reduces generating capacity by the sale of the Drax plant and some supply agreements are changed.

Mr Byers also had First-Group, the transport company, scurrying for shelter after seeking comments on the modest £10.6m acquisition of a West Country bus and coach operator. Its shares fell 9p to 394.5p, ruffling Stagecoach, 2.75p down at 233.75p.

Cadbury Schweppes melted 20.5p to 877p. The soft drinks-to-sweets group weakened as opposition grew to the £1.85bn merger of its soft drinks side with Coca-Cola. The German cartel office is reported to be intent on blocking the deal and the Australian anti-trust commission has come out against it. There is also speculation that other countries, as well as the European Union, will oppose the merger on competition grounds.

In Australia the deal would lift Coca-Cola's share of the carbonated drinks market to 75 per cent.

Granada, the leisure group, achieved a new high, up 27p to 1,377p, following indications that Dresdner Kleinwort Benson is adopting a more benevolent attitude towards the shares,



Captain Mike Moulin with P&O's 'Grand Princess', which has been heavily booked for cruises from the US

P&O shares full steam ahead on buoyant cruise bookings

THERE WAS fresh evidence of strengthening demand in the consumer economy yesterday when P&O, the ferry and cruise group, reported a buoyant start to the year in its cruise business.

The company said its 14 liners had been virtually full in the first three months of the year, despite a dramatic increase in capacity.

Shares in P&O rose by 52.5p to 978p as the company said that the ships in its US business, Princess Cruises, were 98 per cent full even though capacity was up by 44 per cent. The extra space includes the world's largest cruise ship, the

2,600-berth *Grand Princess*, launched two years ago. The outlook is also promising for the rest of the year, P&O said, with the majority of berths already booked. Cruises to Alaska and the Caribbean are proving to be popular choices.

P&O's European cruises have also been virtually full, although the company said there had been some cancellations from American passengers nervous of taking Mediterranean cruises during the Balkan crisis.

P&O's passenger-berth days

- the standard measure of cruise line capacity - was 1.44 million for Princess Cruises and 359,150 on European-based P&O Cruises, the company said. P&O Cruises UK also kept up its bookings, although capacity on the cruises increased only slightly.

P&O's 14 cruise liners, nine are US based and operate under the Princess brand. Three are based in the UK and one in Australia, which operates under the P&O name.

Analysts said the trading update was "extremely encouraging", leading several sector watchers to upgrade their stance on the stock. "It's

a good statement in every respect," said Alistair Gunn from Credit Lyonnais.

P&O announced last month that it was to raise around £2bn from a disposals programme that includes selling its property interests, floating its Bovis construction business and selling the Earl's Court Olympia exhibition centre.

Lord Sterling, the chairman, said the future of the group would be in cruises, ferries, ports and logistics.

At 31 December, the cruise division of the company accounted for almost one-third of the group's net operating assets.

IN BRIEF

World oil stockpiles set to fall sharply after Opec agreement
WORLD OIL stockpiles are likely to shrink sharply as a result of the agreement among Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries to curb supply, says the International Energy Agency. The IEA said that assuming 85 per cent compliance, stockpiles would fall by 230 million barrels by the end of the year. The oil price, which rose from below \$10 a barrel to over \$14.30 after the deal, strengthened further.

ICI sells German coatings business
ICI HAS agreed to sell its German-based original equipment speciality coatings business to PPG Industries. The business, which has annual sales of £10m, supplies coatings for large-scale commercial vehicle manufacturers mainly within Germany, as well as for rail, car, military and industrial applications. The value of the deal is less than 1 per cent of ICI's gross assets. ICI will use proceeds to reduce debt.

WF Electrical buys Crean division
WF ELECTRICAL, the electrical products distributor, is to buy Irish-based James Crean's electrical division for £16m, it said yesterday. The companies to be sold are J&M Wade and Blackstone Holdings, which between them have 47 UK branches. Crean announced pre-tax losses for 1998 of £20.8m, including an exceptional charge of £27.3m, compared with a loss of £1.9m the previous year.

Euro satellite group shuns London
SOCIÉTÉ EUROPÉENNE des Satellites yesterday rejected the idea of a London stock listing but approved plans to list on a second European bourse, probably Frankfurt, company spokesman Yves Feltes said. "The board of directors approved [plans] to list on another euro zone bourse. This de facto excludes London," he said. The company has been listed in Luxembourg since last July, but said volumes had been disappointing.

Sun Life sees new business leap by 35%

BY ANDREW VERITY

AXA SUN LIFE, one of the UK's biggest life insurers, yesterday posted a 35 per cent jump in new business as savers fled from low-interest savings accounts to investment policies offering a higher income.

The company, a division of Sun Life & Provincial Holdings, said sales of lump sum bonds had been exceptional, leaping by 109 per cent to £435.5m. Lump sums overall jumped 56 per cent to £904.7m.

Executives said the jump in new business reflected concern among savers about low interest rates, which now pay little over 5 per cent on a typical 90-day account.

Savers needing income had begun shifting money into share-based investments without wanting to take big risks with their capital. That had fuelled demand for bonds and "cautious" funds offered by AXA Sun Life, executives said.

However, the company voiced serious concerns about the Government's plans for stakeholder pensions, the new type of pension meant to encourage more people to save for retirement.

Les Owen, chief executive of AXA Sun Life, said the proposals may fall in their objective because they focus solely on low charges, failing to take account of the cost of selling the products.

"At the end of the day someone needs to spend time persuading individuals that they have a need to make more pension provision for themselves. If the cost of that is not built in to the pension, then there won't be any significant increase [in the number saving]."

As with other insurers, AXA Sun Life has also been taken aback by an intervention by the Financial Services Authority, the City's senior regulator.

The FSA has warned advisers against selling expensive pensions to customers who may later want to switch to a new stakeholder plan. The concern is that they may get poor value when they switch, because charges will have eaten into early contributions.

AXA Sun Life fears this will create a "pensions planning blight". Afraid of mis-selling, financial advisers would be deterred from selling the products.

"There is a danger that people won't do anything now to save even when it's in their interests - just because the charges might be lower in two years' time," Mr Owen said.

Sun Life & Provincial shares closed up 27p at 543.25p.

Dresdner hunts for acquisitions

BY ANDREW GARFIELD
Financial Editor

GERMANY'S Dresdner Bank said yesterday it was "on the way" to making acquisitions, adding that the consolidation taking place in France and Italy was creating opportunities that had not existed before.

Bernhard Walter, management board chairman, said yesterday: "We've moved out of the phase of examining and analysing. I don't want to say more than that." He added: "We are thinking about concrete acquisitions, whatever form that might take."

The bank reported profits down by 7 per cent to DM2.6bn (£500m) because of sharply higher bad loan provisions. It is to boost its war chest with a DM2.8bn issue of fixed-income stock next month.

The bank is also pushing ahead with plans to list in New York, although it has postponed the listing from this year to next.

Mr Walter said the bank was "not enraptured" by the results, but this year had begun well with trading income up 128 per cent in the first two months.

Dresdner was among European banks badly hit by the emerging markets collapse and exposure to Long-Term Capital Management, the hedge fund.

However, the bank, which owns Kleinwort Benson, the UK merchant bank, has made little secret of its desire to expand in North America, where it has been linked with PaineWebber, and in Europe.

COMPANY RESULTS						
Name	Turnover (£)	Pre-tax (£)	EPS	Dividend	Pay day	X-div
Alida Holdings (F)	0.66m (0.66m)	0.54m (0.54m)	2.13p (2.13p)	- (-)	-	-
CLS Holdings (F)	25.75m (25.75m)	11.1m (10.5m)	8.8p (8.7p)	- (-)	-	-
Concurrent Tech (F)	3.69m (4.77m)	-0.38m (0.59m)	-0.61p (0.77p)	- (-)	-	-
James Crean (F)	6260.37m (277.4m)	-24.34m (-2.25m)	-68.6p (-14.7p)	- (-)	-	-
Dresdner Petroleum (F)	- (-)	-7.61m (0.047m)	-18.18p (0.10p)	- (-)	-	-
Leontine Securities (F)	- (-)	1.572m (0.732m)	28.3p (8.9p)	2.0p (-)	27.05.99	26.04.99
Radamec Group (F)	15.31m (14.17m)	0.45m (1.365m)	1.9p (5.5p)	1.25p (3.1p)	02.07.99	01.06.99

(F) = final * The company proposed a 1-for-30 tender offer instead of a final dividend.

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SPORT

Hamed must make knock-out return

TODAY IS the first day of the rest of Naseem Hamed's life. Tonight at the MEN Arena in Manchester, Hamed and his family go it alone - almost - and stage their first show without Frank Warren and Brendan Ingle, formerly the Prince's promoter and manager-trainer respectively. And jealous eyes will watch and wait for something to go wrong.

As outsiders with virtually no track record in boxing, Prince Promotions, headed by Hamed's eldest brother, Riath, are victims of the sport's small-time xenophobia - and who can state with certainty that the

BOXING
BY GYLN LEACH

Yorkshire-Yemeni faction are not suffering from the real thing? They are viewed with distrust, mainly because they are not recognised "boxing people" and no one knows them to trust them.

Riath Hamed, and younger brother Nabeel, have experience in the commercial side of boxing management. They can claim responsibility for the many sponsorship deals, largely from blue-chip companies, that have been secured for

their multi-millionaire fighter brother. It was the shift in emphasis from boxing to big business that eventually led to the acrimonious break-up of Hamed's relationship with his former mentors.

Warren's contract was not renewed last year, with the Hamed clan stating that they no longer had need for a promotional middle man. In future they would handle things themselves to maximise profits. But the nuts-and-bolts running of tonight's promotion comes courtesy of Matchroom, who will be grateful to return to the big stage albeit for a knockdown

fee believed to be in the region of £50,000.

Having taught Hamed to box as a child and nurtured him through a dozen World Boxing Organisation featherweight title defences, Ingle fell by the wayside not long after Warren. He has been replaced by an unproven Puerto Rican, Oscar Suarez, who will be bolstered by the considerable presence of the legendary trainer Emanuel Steward as a second in the Hamed corner.

"It's all going well, but we've had to hire in expertise where we've needed it," said Riath Hamed. "We need to be

allowed to do what we're good at."

And prior to the event, things seemed to be in nicely in place: Manchester is a proven Hamed town even if ticket sales were initially slow; Matchroom are tried and tested, the originators of the gaudy production favoured by Hamed when they promoted Chris Eubank; opponent Paul Ingle will not trouble the champion; only Suarez seems a risk, but Steward will be there to support him.

The true test, of course, will be whether or not the show makes money. Challenger Ingle plays his part here. Over 7,000

fans will follow him from Scarborough, making a considerable contribution to the live gate. But it seems unlikely that he has much more to offer. The European and Commonwealth champion is said to have been floored in sparring and that bodes ill for his chances against the biggest hitter in the division.

Hamed has a point to prove following his lacklustre points victory over Wayne McCullough in Atlantic City last Halloween. That was only the third time that Hamed has gone the distance in 31 unbeaten fights. Tonight it will be surprising if he does not return to knockout form in less

than four rounds. But the main fight is secondary to the whole event this evening and a few observers will hope for egg on faces of the Sheffield-Arabic variety.

Also on the show, the Detroit legend Thomas "Hit Man" Hearn, the only fighter to have won world titles at six weights, tries to become a champion again when he meets fellow American Nate Miller for the vacant International Boxing Organisation cruiserweight title. But at 41, Hearn is a shell of the Eighties warrior who battled Leonard, Hagler and Duran.

Hearn turned down his original opponent, Belfast's Dar-



Hamed: Point to prove
ren Corbett, because he needed a greater challenge to motivate him. Unfortunately for Hearn, his courage could be his undoing. If Corbett stood a chance against the depleted veteran, Miller's is greater.

Coca-Cola Cup: Azharuddin takes India to respectability but innings distinctly lacks pyrotechnics

Pressure builds early on England

SKIRMISHES BETWEEN underdogs rarely make for pretty viewing and India's meeting with England in Sharjah did not fail to live up to its pre-match billing of the bland leading the bland.

India's total of 222 for 5, after winning the toss, does not represent a huge hurdle by current standards especially on this pitch - the same one as when Pakistan compiled 323 for 5 against England on Wednesday night. With a decent start, it should have required little more than regulation batting.

Yet pressure can bring uncertainty and a searching opening spell from Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad, brought further west for England's struggling opening batsmen.

First to go was Alec Stewart, who, with his feet rooted to the spot, drove around a ball from Srinath that came in on the angle. The England captain is occasionally prone to bad trots when his feet look set in concrete.

But if his problem is a

CRICKET
BY DEREK PRINGLE
in Sharjah

India 222-5
England 52-2

product of playing on the even but high bouncing pitches at The Oval, Nick Knight's problems stem from a loss of confidence from playing on the uneven jigsaw puzzles at Edgbaston.

Having seemingly forsaken his clean striking for a more cautious role, Knight's technique is not yet up to working the ball around against international opposition. Two balls after Stewart was out, Knight got in a tangle against Prasad and was bowled off the inside edge. With Graeme Hick and Graham Thorpe left to patch up the damage England reached the 15 over mark on 52 for 2 - virtually level pegging with India at the same stage.

Batting first, there were so few pyrotechnics from the Indian batsmen - they took 13

boundaries off England as compared to Pakistan's 30 - that it would be tempting to suggest that this was a game for purists. Tempting, except that such a notion totally defeats the point of one-day cricket as something that has been dumbed down to appeal to the lowest common denominator.

Apparently India have been laid low by a virus since arriving here and were below par as well as strength. As the virulence of the bug has yet to be ascertained, it was difficult to tell whether or not England put in an enhanced performance in the field. As it was at least 20°F cooler than the previous day, when the mercury climbed to 110, it probably was, though several catches still went to ground.

Until Mohammed Azharuddin, unbeaten on 74, found his touch in the second half of the innings, India batted as meekly as men on the final drag of their last cigarette. Visualisation is a tool much beloved of sports psychologists and their charges these days. But if India's batsmen were using the technique yesterday, they appeared to have mental snapshots of a green stinker at Trent Bridge, rather than a flat better in Sharjah.

The Indian captain, who has made more than 300 one-day international appearances in his distinguished career, arrived at the crease with his side in some trouble at 61 for 2 with 20 of their 50 overs already spent.

But despite batting with a runner for the latter stages of his innings, Azharuddin lifted the run-rate beyond four an over by steering his side to a total which at least gave his bowlers a fighting chance.

It was not one of Azharuddin's vintage displays and the England attack, despatched all round the stadium by Pakistan's flamboyant stroke-makers during Wednesday's comprehensive 90-run defeat, limited him to just four boundaries during his 85-ball innings.



India's Mohammed Azharuddin hits out on the way to 74 not out against England in Sharjah yesterday. Allsport

SHARJAH SCOREBOARD

India won toss

INDIA

S Ramesh c Stewart b Gough ..60
132 min, 97 balls, 5 fours

S C Ganguly c Stewart b Gough 7
37 min, 26 balls

R S Dravid c and b Hick 1
49 min, 38 balls, 1 four

*M Azharuddin not out ..74
127 min, 85 balls, 2 fours, 2 sixes

A D Jadeja c Thorpe b Flintoff 21
37 min, 27 balls, 1 four

R R Singh c Gough b Flintoff ..11
11 min, 12 balls

N R Mongia not out ..20
31 min, 22 balls, 2 fours

Extras (lb3, w3, nb7) ..13
Total (for 5, 50 overs) ..222

Fall: 1-24 (Ganguly), 2-61 (Dravid), 3-120 (Ramesh), 4-159 (Jadeja), 5-175 (Singh).

Did not bat: S B Joshi, A Kumble, J Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad.

Bowling: Gough 10-0-42-2 (nb5, w1) (5-0-17-1), 3-0-11-1, 2-0-14-0; Muttiahally 10-1-32-0 (nb1, w1) (6-1-16-0), 2-0-7-0, 2-0-9-0; Austin 8-0-45-0 (3-0-13-0), 4-0-21-0, 1-0-11-0;

ENGLAND

N V Knight b Prasad ..11
*A J Stewart b Srinath ..11
G A Hick not out ..17
G P Thorpe not out ..7
Extras (b2, lb3, nb1) ..6
Total (for 2, 15 overs) ..52

Fall: 1-25 (25), 2-25 (25)

To bat: N H Fairbrother, A Flintoff, M A Ealham, I D Austin, R D B Croft, D Gough, A D Muttiahally, Umpires: K T Francis (Sri Lanka) and D B Hair (Aus).

TV Replay Umpire: S D Robinson
Match Referee: S Wetmore
Compiled by Jo King

Victory sustains comeback from Rios

TENNIS
BY DERRICK WHYTE

MARCELO RIOS produced a sure-footed performance to beat Gustavo Kuerten 6-4, 6-3 yesterday and advance to the semi-finals of the Estoril Open in Portugal.

The Chilean, fighting back to form after a four-month absence with a back injury, grew in confidence as the match progressed in hot conditions. The two clay-court specialists broke each other's serves early in the first set before Rios, ranked 13th in the world, began to get the upper hand.

In the quarter-final featuring two Spaniards, the 1996 champion Albert Costa, seeded fourth, overcame the sixth-seeded Felix Mantilla 6-2, 6-4. The Frenchman Jerome Golmard defeated Karim Alami of Morocco 6-4, 7-6. Costa and Golmard will meet in today's semi-finals.

In the women's event the unseeded Hungarian, Rita Kuti Kis, continued her progress with a 6-3, 6-0 win over Anca Barna of Germany. The Estoril Open, a combined ATP and WTA event, is the traditional start to the European clay-court season.

Anna Kournikova registered a surprisingly easy 6-4, 6-1 victory over the top-seeded world No 2, Lindsay Davenport, on Thursday night to reach the quarter-finals of the Bausch & Lomb Championships at Amelia Island, Florida.

It took just 54 minutes for the Kournikova, the world No 16, to dispose of the 22-year-old American. "I was just happy with the win," she said. "When you beat the No 2 in the world, you should be happy."

Combined with her appearance in the final of the Family Circle Cup last week, the Russian has a chance to move up as many as 11 places in the rankings by winning a title here. Thursday's victory was her most impressive since defeating Martina Hingis a year ago in Berlin. "This was important for me because I haven't beaten a top, top player in some time," she agreed. "So, this is very good. It gives me a lot of confidence. I need this."

Kournikova's next match will be against the No 6 seed, Patty Schnyder of Switzerland. The defending champion, Mary Pierce of France, who is the fourth seed, overcame her compatriot, Nathalie Dechy, 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

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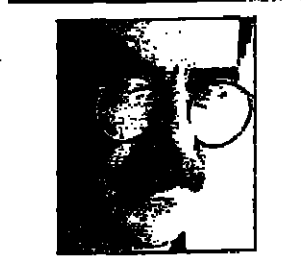
When reality pops the sports journalist's bubble

A FORMER colleague, who shall remain Ken Mays of the Daily Telegraph, had a favourite rhetorical device when conversation turned to travel.

If ever a person - oh foolish, unwitting person! - asked him if he had visited a country - for argument's sake, let's call it Erewhon - he would expostulate on these lines: "Have I been to Erewhon? Have I been to Erewhon? I've been to Erewhon eight times. Eight times. I'll tell you what - I've been round the world so many times I've met myself coming back."

Nobody travelled further or more often than Kenny. And that was an order.

Even in this era of satellite



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

television packages and omnipresent news and picture agencies, sports journalists still get to visit a fair quota of foreign fields. Every sport worth its name is hitched to an inter-

national rota, a grand prix or a world series or a European tour, something sponsors and media can climb aboard. Asked to name the process right now, the Pentagon would probably suggest something like Operation Sustained Jamboree.

"All this travel" - I hear you ask - "does it broaden the mind?" Other questions - "Call that a real job?" or "How do you get away with it?" - are, sadly, beyond my earshot. In my experience, most travel that has a sporting context does the opposite of broadening the mind. For the travelling reporter, life narrows down to the essentials: taxis (plus bills), accreditation, schedule of events, hotel room, place in stadium, telephone

line, deadline, meals (plus bills), beer (plus bills) and, ideally, stories (plus quotes).

Some may decide to do a Trevor Brooking - which, for the benefit of those unaware of the former England midfielder's touring routine, involved fitting in a visit to a cultural site. Any art gallery, cathedral or museum will do.

But, by and large, such adornments do not alter the purpose of the visit. For the duration of each sporting event, you and your colleagues are within a tough little bubble, a bubble which you can inhabit in virtually any land at any time of the year, a bubble in which the same questions and preoccupations recur.

In retrospect, the valuable parts of this not-so-grand tour are those which create discomfort. I do not refer to a lack of leg room on the plane, or a rip-off tariff on the mini-bar.

Havana. As I lay my cutlery down upon my plate for the last time, a young woman arrives at my restaurant table and asks if she can take the scraps for her child. She has a bag ready.

Belfast. Our taxi driver takes us around a bit on the way back to the airport, offering a commentary. The streets we had driven through two days earlier are revealed as an interlinking jigsaw of nationalist and loyalist territories, marked respectively by tricolours flying from buildings or

lamp posts and houses and paving slabs painted with the Union flag. It is like noticing one ant in the garden, and then being able to see nothing but ants, a garden teeming with ants.

Atlanta. Dawn breaks over Olympic Park and a small army of peak-capped FBI agents are busy placing little flags into the grass to mark the landing points of shrapnel from the bomb which had exploded a few hours earlier, killing two and wounding many more.

Atlanta. 50 cameras focus upon the front door of a small flat, inside which dwells the prime suspect for the bombing, an event security guard who is publicly accused and

metaphorically flayed by the American newspapers and television networks. No charges are subsequently laid against him.

Atlanta. Two days after the 1996 Olympics' closing ceremony, the awnings, tapes, and adverts in the city centre start to be pulled down - and the streets, almost imperceptibly, fill with people whom you would instinctively cross a street to avoid.

Where have they all been?

Split. Running along the coastal road, and stopping near a huge TV mast on the hillside gazing out as the sun sets over the Adriatic. Returning to see families seated at the poolside of my hotel,

eating, chattering, listening to music, allowing their children to sample wine far into the warm summer night. Then I recalled how the face of our minibus driver had hardened as he spoke of the Serbs, whose shells were to land on that TV mast and many other parts of the medieval city a couple of years later.

Split. When the Yugoslav flag is raised in the stadium before the 1990 European Athletics Championships, there is whistling and booing. When the Croatian flag is raised, there is a sustained tumult. At the time, we regard it as a bit over-the-top - but a nice piece of opening ceremony colour. Next time it will mean more.

22/RUGBY UNION

Five Nations' Championship: Wales aim to ruin Grand Slam dreams of England in the tournament's final act at Wembley

Catt has to shoulder responsibility

IT HAS not been the best of decades for Welsh self-confidence. Back in the early 1970s, Barry John viewed the annual Five Nations bonfire with England as a foregone conclusion - "You could always tell when we were playing them, because the touts couldn't get rid of their tickets," he once joked - and, as recently as the late 80s, Jonathan Davies took malicious pleasure in winding up sunny red rose battalions before making them choke on their old school ties. Now, in the last match of the last Five Nations in the last year of the century, the boot is on the other foot. The way Graham Henry and Rob Howley tell it, this current English side is the rugby equivalent of Kryptonite; the Welsh coach credits Lawrence Dallaglio and company with a place in the world's top three, while his captain goes one better by calling them the best in the business. "If you're

BY CHRIS HEWETT
Rugby Union Correspondent

waiting for me to criticise England and pick holes in the way they play, you're wasting your time," said Henry in answer to a suggestion that he might be over-egging the admiration bit just a little. "They beat the world champions in December and should have beaten Australia the previous week. Doesn't that say something about the quality they possess?" It certainly does, and it would be reasonable to suggest that, had any two of Jeremy Guscott, Phil de Glanville, Will Greenwood and Jonny Wilkinson been inhabiting the England midfield at Wembley tomorrow afternoon, the touts might have found themselves even more out of pocket than they were back in the heyday of King John. The fact that only Wilkinson can boast the full complement of serviceable limbs

rather alters the balance of the contest, however, to the extent that Wales sense a realistic chance of denying the Grand Slam favourites at the death. To do so, they will need to pilfer 40 per cent of the ball - no

TABLE AND RESULTS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	3	0	0	72	46	6
Scotland	3	2	0	1	54	57	4
France	3	1	0	2	53	64	2
Wales	3	1	0	2	77	95	2
Ireland	4	1	0	3	66	90	2

Results: 6 Feb: Ireland 9 France 10; Scotland 24 Scotland 21; Wales 23 Ireland 29. 6 March: France 33 Wales 34; Ireland 15 England 27; 20 March: England 21 France 10; Scotland 30 Ireland 13.

Remaining fixtures: Today: France v Scotland (at Stade de France). Tomorrow: Wales v England (at Wembley).

easy matter against an English pack playing out of its rhinoceros skin. The newcomers to the Welsh eight, Peter Rogers and Ben Evans in the front row and Brett Slinkin on the open-side flank, are likely

discover rather more about themselves tomorrow than they learned in their previous outings against France and Italy; Slinkin, in particular, can expect some real heat from Neil Back, and if the ball-winning New Zealander fails to deliver amid the boots and bullets, his colleagues will spend an unpleasant afternoon peering into their own nether regions.

But confronted only by a huge swathe of English inexperience out wide - Steve Hanley and Barrie-Jon Mather are debutants while the cherubic Wilkinson has only six caps in his school satchel - the quality Red Dragon backs should ensure a handsome return on whatever possession their forwards produce. From Howley at scrum-half to Shane Howarth at full-back, the Welsh are richly endowed in the ideas department and increasingly adept at turning theory into practice. Clive Woodward, the England

coach, talked up his own three-quarters with such enthusiasm yesterday that he made Henry sound positively churlish. "Hanley and Mather bring something extra to the team and I'm sure Wales fear our back division," he said. "I'm fielding the best available English team and I'm totally relaxed about it; we're certainly not going to play any differently and having won three from three in this championship, there is no reason why we shouldn't go in with genuine confidence in our ability to finish on a high."

But Woodward was forced to concede that the injuries to Guscott and David Rees, the Sale wing, had deposited a whole truckload of extra responsibility on the less than reliable shoulders of Mike Catt, who wins his 34th cap at outside-half. "We have pace and power in this new back-line and I'm excited by that, but the reorganisation means Mike will

have to lead. There is more emphasis on Mike's performance this time, for sure."

That will have come as music to Welsh ears. Largely because of their line-out fragility - their recent performances in that crucial phase have come as close as the game is ever likely to get to situation comedy - and their suspect organisation in the face of driving mauls, the Welsh fear English tactical kicking, as practised by Wilkinson or Paul Grayson, more than they fear Catt's obsession with breaking the land speed record every time he receives the ball. Ultimately, the Grand Slam depends on Catt's ability to control his own instincts and, by extension, the game.

All in all, then, a fitting swansong for the world's oldest international rugby tournament, which expands to incorporate the Italians next season. It will be noisy, passionate and very

WALES v ENGLAND at Wembley			
S Howarth	(Sale)	15 M Perry	(Bath)
G Thomas	(Cardiff)	14 D Luger	(Harlequins)
M Taylor	(Swansea)	13 B-J Mather	(Sale)
S Gibbs	(Swansea)	12 J Wilkinson	(Newcastle)
D James	(Harlequins)	11 S Hanley	(Sale)
N Jenkins	(Pontypridd)	10 M Catt	(Bath)
R Howley	(Cardiff, capt)	9 M Dawson	(Northampton)
P Rogers	(London Irish)	8 J Leonard	(Harlequins)
G Jenkins	(Swansea)	7 R Cockerill	(Leicester)
B Evans	(Swansea)	6 D Garforth	(Leicester)
C Quinnett	(Richmond)	5 T Rodber	(Northampton)
C Wyatt	(Llanelli)	4 M Johnson	(Saracens)
C Harris	(Swansea)	3 N Hill	(Leicester)
B Slinkin	(Neath)	2 N Back	(Leicester)
S Quinnett	(Llanelli)	1 L Dallaglio	(Wasps, capt)

Replacements: 16 N Best (Northampton), 17 T Underwood (Newcastle), 18 A Healy (Leicester), 19 M Cory (Leicester), 20 G Archer (Newcastle), 21 V Ubovu (Bath), 22 N McCarthy (Gloucester).
Referee: A Watson (South Africa). Kick-off: 4.0 tomorrow (BBC1).

Trying times fail to dim Woodward fire

Criticism after the victory against France has not affected the spirit within the camp or the England coach's approach to the game. By Chris Hewett

WILL ENGLAND wrap up a fourth Grand Slam in nine years by beating Wales at Wembley tomorrow? Do they stand the remotest chance of lifting the Webb Ellis Trophy in November? Can the red roses hope to reach full bloom in the prolonged absence of Will Greenwood, their most incisive attacking weapon? Will Richard Cockerill and Austin Healey ever shut up? All of the above - especially the last - are legitimate questions, but none can be said to represent the burning issue of the day. What people seem to want to know, 24 hours from a last Five Nations hurrah and with the World Cup a mere 173 days distant, is this: are England boring?

It is hardly a ground-breaking topic for discussion - it generally crops up when the hope-and-glory brigade start winning rugby matches. They were, it was said, boring in 1980, when Bill Beaumont's ancien régime clapped the rest of Europe in leg irons; they were, according to many, pretty damned monotonous in 1991, when Ackford and Dooley and Richards were chucking their weight around the playing fields of the northern hemisphere; and they were, by common consent, positively mind-numbing under Jack Rowell in 1995.

Remember all that "interactive rugby"? No, thought not. So what about the Clive Woodward vintage as they merrily roll along on a diet of 1.5 tries per match? The coach rolls his eyes to the heavens, lets slip a half-sigh and shakes his head mournfully. "Boring? That's ridiculous, don't you think? It's so ridiculous that I can't bring myself to resent it, although I do think of the players and how they must feel when they read this stuff. Let me tell you something about the French game: we played the same way that day as when we

drew with the All Blacks in '97 and beat the Boks last December. The only significant difference was that we didn't score a try. You can analyse away to your heart's content, but the bottom line was that the French stopped us crossing their line. Fair play to them. We bombed a few chances, sure, but they defended superbly. "You can't control expectation and perception, I suppose. We scored one solitary try against South Africa - a try from a cross-field kick, as it happened - but, because we beat the world champions, a side on a fantastic winning streak, we were heroes. Against France, it was widely assumed that we would win. And win we did, by

'I haven't changed a bit in terms of how I want to see England play; as far as I'm concerned, there is no turning back'

kicking our goals. That seems to have been regarded as a failure in some quarters of the press, but I can't for the life of me understand why.

"I haven't changed a bit since starting this job, not in terms of how I want to see England play the game; as far as I'm concerned, there is no turning back. Do you honestly think I'd have shifted Tim Rodber to lock or kept Lawrence Dallaglio, Richard Hill and Neil Back in the same back-row if I'd wanted us to stick the ball up our jumpers? These blokes are footballers, they can play a bit. I'd have picked a very different pack if I'd wanted to put up the shutters. Sometimes, I think people forget that there are 15 guys on the other side of half-way trying to stop you doing what you want to do."

Okay, not boring then. How about functional? "Look, I haven't received one negative e-mail (Woodward lived and breathed computers in a past life and he remains resolutely techno-friendly) about the way we've tackled this championship, but I've had hundreds saying: 'Don't listen to the press, just keep winning.' When I went to Sale last weekend to run an eye over Steve Hanley, I had people patting me on the back in the stand. The enthusiasm for what we're doing is definitely there."

"But the players are hard on themselves, maybe too hard. Backy told me after the French match that the atmosphere in the dressing room was the flattest he could remember, which seemed a bit much considering we'd just beaten them for the first time in five attempts. But they're professionals and they're serious about their jobs."

"Back in 1980, when I played in a Grand Slam side, it really was a case of getting through the game and then going out on the lash. Things have changed. This is a very close-knit team, just as we were; there were some fantastic people in the '80 side, people I've stayed friendly with for almost 20 years. But professionalism has introduced another dimension."

There has never been a top dog quite like Woodward, at least not in stuffy old England; indeed, it seems fair and reasonable to describe him as a unique sporting figure, rather than merely a unique rugby one. While many coaches attempt to bridge the generation gap by infiltrating their players' peer group and becoming "part of the scene", they invariably end up resembling some menopausal father dancing patetically at his daughter's birthday disco. Not Woodward. His relationship with his squad is brotherly rather than paternal, unusually close and un-



The England coach Clive Woodward believes the team are in good shape ahead of the World Cup in November

Robert Hallam

favourably open. Remarkably, he consulted his senior players before picking Hanley, an uncapped 19-year-old, for tomorrow's match. "To a man, they said: 'Yeah, good call, let's do it,'" he reports, proudly.

However, he now accepts that his unshakeable faith in the power of youth led him up a nasty cul-de-sac in Australia and New Zealand last summer. Aware that his World Cup certainties - the Dallagios, Johnsons, Leonards and Guscotts - were in dire need of a restorative spell on the sun-lounger, he named a 36-strong party so wet behind the ears that the water was cascading down its back. Only four of tomorrow's starters undertook the trip and while Cockerill and the two Matts, Perry and Dawson, flowered under pressure like cacti in the desert, the fourth, Jonny Wilkinson, might have been ruined for life.

"What I should have done, of course, was pull in Rob Andrew and Dean Ryan and every other hardened, seasoned England cap I could find. I should have taken a gnarled old side down there and told them to scrap it out for queen and country. I got it wrong, unfortunately, and it still rankles, just as losing to France in Paris last year still rankles. The period before and during the southern hemisphere tour was my worst spell in this job, the one time where I stopped enjoying it for a while and the only point at which Lawrence and I have had words. I knew he was on his last legs and thought he should have stopped playing before the cup final. But he's a Wasp and he took another view."

This summer's crossing of the equator will be altogether different. The Rugby Football Union has agreed a budget that allows Woodward to take

his best 36 to the Couran Cove resort on South Stradbroke Island, a swanky rich man's play-pool off the Queensland coast, for three weeks of warm-weather World Cup training. England will then play the Australian Barbarians in Brisbane before topping and tailing the trip with a one-off Test against the Wallabies in Sydney. If they lose 76-0 this time, the coach really will be in Rats' Alley.

"I'm relishing that Test match, not particularly because of what happened last June but because it will provide some hard evidence of where we're at. As we speak, I think we're in pretty good shape going into the World Cup; standards have risen all round and the players are so into everything that I never have to worry about gym work or conditioning. They do all that before they come anywhere near an England squad session, which gives you some

indication of the levels of enthusiasm."

"Of course, I'm worried about Will Greenwood." (The Leicester centre is suffering from inflammation of the pelvic bone and has not set foot on a rugby pitch since England's victory over Italy last November). "He's a top player, undisputedly world class, and I have a horrible suspicion that he won't play again this season, which would mean him missing the summer trip. For all I know, he's out of World Cup contention already. I can't make plans around someone who has no idea when he might be fit."

"But you work with what you have. Wilkinson is in the side now and with his kicking game, he may be the best thing that ever happened to Mike Catt. We have a right-foot, left-foot combination at 10 and 12 and Jonny's style makes it much easier for Mike to play the

physical game he's best suited to. I think Catt is looking at a huge opportunity here."

Just as England have a huge opportunity to lay down another World Cup marker tomorrow, Woodward, contracted until August of next year but prepared to measure himself only by the events of October and November, attaches enormous importance to this farewell Five Nations fixture with the Welsh.

"The Five Nations is a tournament, just as the World Cup is a tournament, and I want to win tournaments," he says. "People are always banging on about developing players in the Five Nations so we can compete with the southern hemisphere countries, but I look at it from the opposite angle. I'd rather win a Grand Slam than beat South Africa, definitely. The Springbok Test was a friendly. The match tomorrow is no friendly."

17 year old high jumper given clearance for take off.



The British Airways Olympic Futures Programme of multi-sport training camps in London and Orlando is helping 175 young British athletes achieve their Olympic dreams.

BRITISH AIRWAYS
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APRIL
FA Carling Premiership - Chelsea v Leicester City
Sky Sports 1



MAY
Tetley's Bitter Cup Final - Newcastle v Wasps
Sky Sports 2



JUNE
Cricket World Cup Semi-Finals and Final
Sky Sports 1



JULY
Pool World Championships
Sky Sports 2



AUGUST
Start of US Open Tennis Championship
Sky Sports 2 and 3



SEPTEMBER
Ryder Cup Golf - USA v Europe
Sky Sports 1



OCTOBER
Super League Grand Final live from Old Trafford
Sky Sports 1



NOVEMBER
South Africa v England 1st Test
Sky Sports 2



DECEMBER
FA Cup 3rd Round
Sky Sports 2



JANUARY
Worthington Cup Semi-Finals
Sky Sports 2



SPORTS 1

SPORTS 2

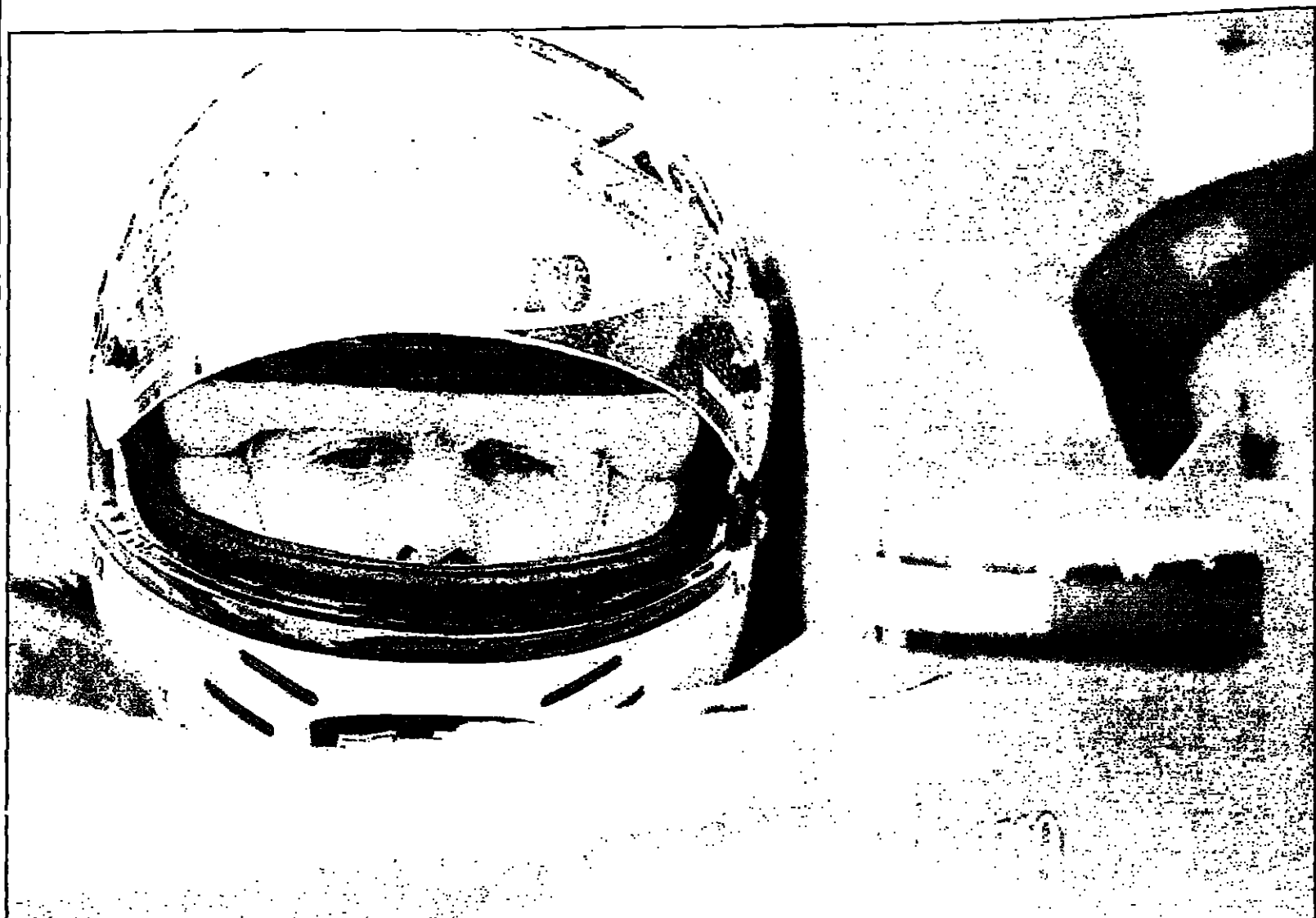
SPORTS 3

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Brazilian Grand Prix: German driver primed to upset established order



Ferrari's Michael Schumacher shows his determination in practice for the Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos yesterday

Allsport

Jordan backs Frentzen

EDDIE JORDAN firmly believes that the ambition of Eddie Irvine, his former driver, to be leading the world championship into the San Marino Grand Prix in three weeks' time will be seriously threatened by the Jordan racer Heinz-Harald Frentzen this weekend.

Jordan was in his usual ebullient form in Interlagos yesterday, exuding the bonhomie of a man whose sale of 40 per cent of his company to the merchant bankers Warburg Pincus has liberated him from the financial worries that concern most people.

"I tell you," Jordan insisted, "you overlook Heinz-Harald at your peril. You just watch him. I told him at the beginning of the year, 'I want spunk. I want fire.' And the guy is really fired up. He's flying right now and he's ready for it. Don't underestimate him."

Frentzen lies second to Irvine in the world championship, after a successful start to his campaign in Australia where he challenged Irvine, the eventual winner, strongly

MOTOR RACING
BY DAVID TREMAYNE
in São Paulo

until an air filter worked loose and partially blocked the engine's intakes, during the electronic management system into automatically richening the fuel mixture. This forced the German to back off the throttle to conserve fuel and denied him the chance of pressuring Irvine into a mistake. "Without that," Jordan insists, "Heinz would have been right up there."

Interlagos is a tricky circuit at the best of times, one of the most challenging in the Formula One calendar even though it was shortened dramatically at the start of the decade. It is made more demanding by its relatively low grip, steep gradients, slow infield corners and fast, sweeping turns. But the biggest problem is its numerous bumps, which can seriously destabilise the stiff sprung modern generation of cars. Yesterday the changeable weather added further to the challenge as the track was deluged short-

ly before free practice began in the morning.

If Frentzen is one of the dark horses for the Brazilian Grand Prix, yesterday it was business as usual initially as the McLaren duo, David Coulthard and Mika Hakkinen, headed the times when conditions were at their worst.

Frentzen, the newcomer Stéphane Sarrazin (replacing the injured Luca Badoer at McLaren), Jarno Trulli, Giancarlo Fisichella, Pedro de la Rosa and Ralf Schumacher all spun as they explored the limit of grip.

Behind the McLarens, local hero Rubens Barrichello was a star in his Stewart-Ford. After getting out with little over 20 minutes left in the first session, the Brazilian rewarded the patience of his spectating countrymen with, temporarily, the third fastest time, once again underlining the performance he had shown in the first race. But as the track began to dry out more it became a lottery. Fisichella pushed his Benetton to the top of the timesheets before Damon Hill surged ahead. Then Coulthard restored the status quo as the track dried

further, chased in the closing stages by Barrichello. Trulli and Johnny Herbert in the second Stewart as the Scotsman's team pushed into the top five, vying for third place.

Ultimately Ralf Schumacher timed the switch to dry weather tyres the best, undercutting Coulthard's time by three and a half seconds to head Fisichella and his brother, Michael.

"It really was as simple as that," Schumacher said. "I got out at the right time, on the right tyres."

But while the German celebrated, his Winfield Williams team-mate Alex Zanardi, the reigning American ChampCar champion, lay at the bottom of the times after his car had stopped with an electrical fault after one lap and remained in the garage throughout the session.

Friday practice times are a notoriously unreliable index of performance, as many teams run with differing fuel loads and not all are looking for ultimate speed at this stage. But a wet race on a weekend in which the forecast is not favourable, may be the answer to Michael

Schumacher's prayers. However much the Ferrari team try to put a brave face on things after McLaren's upsetting pace in the season opener in Melbourne, it is clear that the red cars still have a long way to go before they can challenge on sheer speed. Yesterday a team insider admitted, "McLaren's pace in Australia simply stunned us. There was no way we expected to be so far behind. We knew that we went there without the optimum aerodynamic package, but though we've done a lot of testing since then I would say that we have no better than halved the gap."

There are already rumours of a witchhunt within a team desperate to win the title this season, and in the climate of growing demoralisation a wet race might turn things upside down and give Schumacher a much-needed chance to claw back some of the deficit sooner than expected. His bravura display of car control as he threw the Ferrari round yesterday was a timely reminder of his uncanny talent, and perhaps also his mounting frustration.

Robinson faced with one-year suspension

BASKETBALL

BY RICHARD TAYLOR

JUST AS Derby Storm put one of their disciplinary problems behind them, another surfaced for the Budweiser League club yesterday, when their American player Maurice Robinson was banned from the game for one year after failing to supply a complete urine sample during a Sports Council doping control test.

The better news for Storm was that Yorick Williams rejoins their line-up for tonight's opening game against Thames Valley Tigers in their best of three play-off quarter-final, after completing his regular season ban following the brawl at Chester in January.

Derby are now appealing against Robinson's ban, which will clear him to play tonight and in Wednesday's second leg. However, if the appeal fails and the tie goes to a third game, Robinson could miss that and the finals at Wembley in three weeks' time, if Derby qualify.

Robinson's offence occurred when he was one of eight players tested by the Sports Council following the League Trophy final at the NEC on 13 March, which Derby lost to Manchester Giants.

Players are often dehydrated after games and Robinson could not supply a sample sufficient for analysis. But after he was given extra time to consume fluids, Robinson left the arena without providing the sample.

A statement by the Doping Control Committee of the English Basketball Association confirmed the "acceptance of the situation by the player" and added: "Failure to provide a complete sample constitutes a doping offence."

The Thames Valley Tigers' coach, Paul James, was in the meantime playing down the return of the England international Williams to the Derby line-up prior to tonight's match.

James said: "I'm sure he feels he has something to prove and that could disrupt them. Derby have played pretty well without Yorick."

Hamilton has the measure of Hendry

SNOOKER

ANTHONY HAMILTON finally got the measure of Stephen Hendry for the first time yesterday to reach the semi-finals of the British Open in Plymouth.

After eight consecutive defeats, the Nottingham professional beat Hendry 5-3. "Stephen didn't play to his normal standard but this is a great result for me," the world No 11 said.

Hendry was not too disturbed by his defeat, saying, "There is nothing much wrong with my game. It's just my concentration that let me down today. If I don't get that right it will show up even more in the longer frame matches at Sheffield. But it's a good win for Anthony and he held himself together well at the end."

John Higgins is within two matches of retaining his title after another emphatic victory yesterday. The world champion achieved his second whitewash in four matches with a 5-0 trouncing of Brian Morgan, the world No 27 from Tiptree.

Higgins has dropped just two frames en route to the semi-finals and now plays Peter Ebdon, the world No 7, or Irish No 2, Fergal O'Brien.

"I hope Peter gets through because I haven't got a good record against him and I owe him a few," said the world No 1. "But really it doesn't matter. I'm just pleased to get this far without being stretched. Long may it continue."

Morgan was fortunate to beat Nick Walker in the previous round, fluking the last red and clearing up to win on the pink for a 5-4 success. Higgins outscored him 440 points to 37 with breaks of 53, 47, 48, 42, 44 and 101.

"Brian missed a few shots and I managed to take advantage. There's not much more I can say," Higgins said.

Beeston aim to slip into play-offs

HOCKEY

BY BILL COLWILL

BEESTON, BACK from their exploits in Europe last weekend in which they finished a creditable fifth in their first attempt in the European Club Championship, could upset the season's form books tomorrow and snatch a place in next weekend's Premiership play-offs at Reading.

First, however, they must beat Southgate, already qualified for Reading, and then await the result from Canterbury. The Kent club would lose out if beaten by Guildford. Mathematically a large defeat for Reading at home to relegated Brooklands would also let Beeston in but the odds are heavily stacked against this.

Beeston's manager Graham Griffiths, announcing a full squad, said: "More than we had in Europe," referring to the absence of Philip Sully and Andrew West with the England Under-18 squad winning European Gold, and added: "We are looking forward to the game where much will depend on how Southgate approach it. Five days in Europe has given us a big bonus. We learnt more there than in half a season at home." Southgate will be without their high-scoring German international, Elko Rott, missing with a knee injury.

Peterborough Town, looking to regain their National League status, drew first blood in the Inter League play-offs at Milton Keynes yesterday, beating Fareham 2-1.

Gateshead seek clarification

RUGBY LEAGUE

BY DAVE HADFIELD

GATESHEAD, STILL seething over the glut of penalties that they believe cost them their last game at Warrington, have asked the Rugby League to study the video and tell them where they went wrong.

The new Super League franchise lost at Widderspool after leading for most of the game despite an 18-5 penalty count against them.

"We can't get the points back and we don't want to be whinging Aussies," said the Thunder's chief executive, Shane Richardson. "But we are concerned, because it seems that playing at home can be such a big advantage."

It is Gateshead's turn to be at home today, but Richardson says that their supporters, still new to the game, do not exert the same influence on referees. "It was a cauldron at Widderspool," he said.

Gateshead have doubts over Andrew Hick and Adam Maher,

while their opponents Halifax, who have shown few signs yet of last season's form, might welcome back Kelvin Skerrett and Chris Chester.

Going to Wigan when leading them in the table will not be the only novel experience for Warrington tomorrow. The Wigan team will also add to the air of unfamiliarity.

Injuries have forced John Monie to pair Andy Farrell and Jason Robinson at half-back, with Wes Davies at full-back for Kris Radlinski, who is to see a specialist about a knee injury that could keep him out for three months.

"It's a bonus for us," said the Warrington coach, Darryl Van de Velde. "But they've still got a lot of good players and adaptable players. We can't dismiss them, but we're still going there

with a spring in our step after four wins."

Van de Velde hopes that Simon Gillies and the influential Scott Wilson will be fit to return, but Jon Roper's absence for at least another month gives Michael Watmough the chance to re-establish himself at loose forward, after what his coach calls the best form of his career over Easter.

No club did better over Easter than the Sheffield Eagles, whose two victories have almost persuaded their coach, John Kear, of the virtues of playing twice a week.

"It's turned our season around," he said. "The most that you will be able to lose and get into the top five will be about 10 games, so to have lost four at this stage would put you up against it."

Chris Thorman's reward for the clever kick that effectively won the match against Hull in the last minute is likely to be a

return to the reserves when the Eagles meet Leeds tomorrow.

"He did remarkably well because he had been having a bit of a nightmare, but now the thing to do could be to take him out of the firing line," said Kear of the young Geordie. Kear will also be without the injured Steve Molloy but could bring back Matt Crowther.

Two teams without a point, Huddersfield and Hull, meet in what already looks like a crunch match. "I'm still very positive," said the Huddersfield coach, Malcolm Reilly, after their latest defeat, by Castleford on Wednesday night. "I don't think our first win is far away."

Salford, the other team without a point, will find out whether Andy Gregory's regime of 7.00am training sessions this week has done them any good when they face Castleford, while Bradford, stung from a heavy defeat at St Helen's, could take it out on Wakefield Trinity.

Racism backfires on St Kilda player

AUSTRALIAN RULES

A LEADING Australian Rules footballer has stood down for a month and effectively fined himself A\$20,000 (£8,100) yesterday after admitting to taunting a black opponent.

Peter Everitt also undertook to attend a four-week counselling course on Aboriginal issues. His decision, preempting a formal fine, was welcomed by the country's Aboriginal leaders after a spate of racial incidents on Australia's sporting fields this month.

Gatijl Djerrkura, the chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, said football players and clubs were "now on clear notice that

racist taunts will no longer be tolerated on the playing field and that a heavy price will be paid by offenders."

Everitt, who plays for St Kilda, admitted racially vilifying a Melbourne opponent, Scott Chisholm, during a match in Melbourne last Sunday.

He taunted Chisholm about the highly symbolic red, black and gold Aboriginal colours on his mouthguard and admitted using "other offensive terms". "I put this discipline on myself and I've spoken to Scott. I'm going to undergo a four-week awareness program," Everitt

said. "I've probably crossed a line that shouldn't be crossed."

Australian Rules, which has the highest number of Aboriginal players at the elite level of any Australian sport, introduced a Racial and Religious Vilification Code in 1995 after a series of racial spats. Up until now the code has never been used. Had Everitt not preempted a tribunal hearing, he could have been the first player punished under it.

The Everitt row came a week after another incident that stirred debate on the issue of racism in Australian Rules. Sam Newman, a former star player and current TV personality, painted his face black to

impersonate the Aboriginal player Nicky Winmar after the Aboriginal player pulled out of an appearance on his show.

Winmar is a leading advocate of Aboriginality in the Australian Football League. In 1993, responding to taunts from opposing fans, he famously raised his jersey during a match against Collingwood and pointed to the colour of his skin.

Djerrkura said that, while Australia had a proud sporting tradition, the events of the past two weeks had threatened to stain its reputation.

"Racism is a corrosive phenomenon and strong leadership is needed to ensure it is quickly stamped out," he said.

FA Cup semi-final: Arsenal manager thankful for a back-line with 'degrees in defending' as he closes in on another Double

Wenger is still a man of mystery

WHEN HE came to England in September 1996 Arsène Wenger was largely unknown. Today his scholarly features and thoughtful comments are as much part of the game's landscape as Kevin Keegan's enthusiasm and Gianluca Vialli's studied humility. Yet he remains a man of contradiction and mystery.

We know he was born in the Alsace, near the Franco-German border, was a modest player - briefly reaching the top level with Strasbourg - who developed into a respected coach with Monaco and in Japan. He has a girlfriend, Annie, and child, who remain in France, but we know little of his hobbies or interests outside football. It seems there may not be any.

He is polite and quiet, yet tough enough to command respect in the industrial atmosphere of an English dressing room, and rough enough to tolerate one of the worst disciplinary records in the game.

He has enough sense of history, and sportsmanship, to persuade his club and the Football Association to annul the controversial FA Cup victory over Sheffield United earlier this season, yet when Dennis Bergkamp became the 51st Footballer of the Year last May, only with reluctance did he allow the player to make the briefest of appearances to collect his award.

More insights into Wenger will emerge for, earlier this season, he signed a contract which ended speculation linking the 49-year-old with Japan's 2002 World Cup campaign, and tied him to Highbury until that summer.

Whether they will reveal a complex man or simply one with a passion for winning and football remains to be seen. In the meantime, we assemble snippets of information, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and he collects trophies.

On Tuesday, at Highbury, Arsenal beat Blackburn to move within a point of Manchester United in the Premiership. Tomorrow, at Villa Park, they meet United in the FA Cup semi-final. Both clubs are within reach of becoming the first to achieve three Doubles, in Arsenal's case the feat would, uniquely, be back-to-back.

Yesterday, as he prepared his players at Arsenal's green-belt training ground, the economics graduate was urbane, calm and unreluctant as ever. With Arsenal having won four and drawn one of their last five matches with United, he had no need to be anything else.

A few days earlier, over



GLENN MOORE

lunch, he had been a bit more expansive. The speed of Arsenal's success had surprised him, he thought Tony Adams could eventually succeed him, and that Glenn Hoddle should get back on the managerial merry-go-round as soon as possible.

He also surprised. His footballing preference may be Gallic, as the number of French players at Highbury illustrates, but when given control of the wine list he eschewed a long list of Clarets, Burgundies and Côtes-des-Rhône, to choose a Californian red. Not that he drank much of it. Wenger, unsurprisingly, is a sipper rather than a quaffer.

'Tony Adams is a natural captain and I can see him being manager at Arsenal. His heart is here'

He has, against his own expectations, drawn more heavily on his vintage footballers. "When I arrived," he said, "I felt the team was at its peak, getting old and needed some regeneration. Since the Premier League existed it had not been involved in the championship. I thought maybe we were far behind teams like Manchester United or Liverpool. But I was encouraged because we finished third in my first season."

While Wenger then built on Bruce Rioch's changes, adding Marc Overmars and a posse of Frenchmen to his signing of Dennis Bergkamp, he realised the defence was capable of going on far longer than anyone anticipated. The "sound-bite" is a Wenger characteristic and he has one for his famed back-line. They have, he said, "degrees in defending" while Adams "is a professor of defence".

The 33-year-old Adams, whose influence in the dressing room was crucial to Wenger winning the team's confidence, remains a core figure. "He is a

natural captain and I can see him being manager at Arsenal. His heart is here. I could also think that of Bould, Seaman, Dixon, Winterburn, they are all intelligent, they could all be managers.

"But while they have potential to do it, the question is whether they will want to sacrifice so much of their life when they have already spent so much time in football. Are they really motivated?"

Wenger, who was relegated early in his coaching career, with Nancy, added: "If they wanted to do some coaching I would give them the chance but my advice is: 'Do not be too quick', take your time to learn the job."

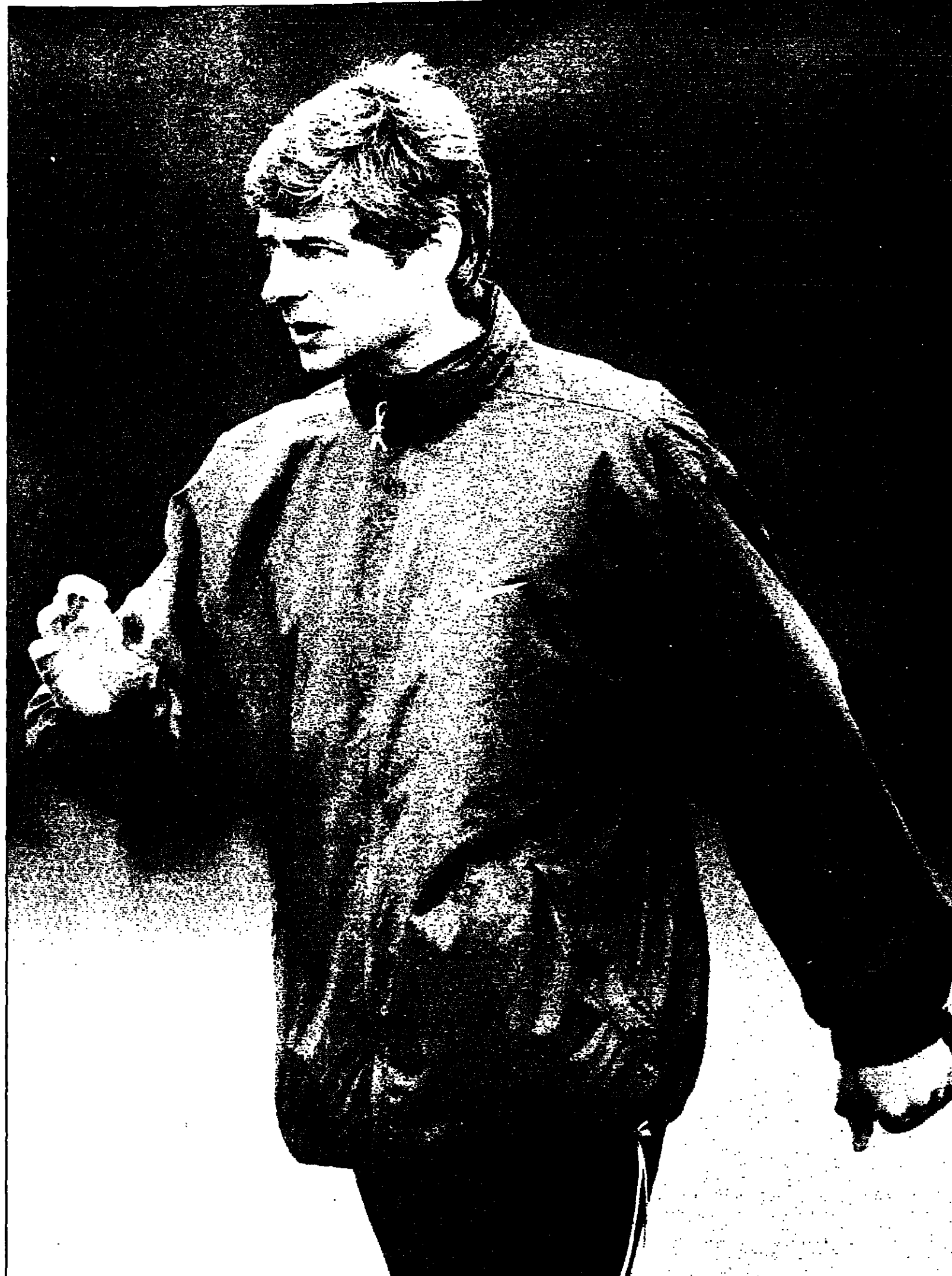
So, should Adams start at Southend rather than Highbury? "Bad players can become good managers, you do not have to be good player. But one of the privileges of being a great player is that you get quicker to managing a big team than a normal player. The biggest thing for a manager is to get into a big club so if you get the chance you must be ready, so you must first learn your job."

"I haven't spoken to Tony about it, he still has some years to go as a player. I think he will go on to 2003, 2004, unless injuries become a problem. At the moment they are not, the only problem is how long will he want to go on. He is a winner and a winner never accepts not being a winner anymore. When he feels he is no longer strong enough to win things he will say: 'Sorry, I'm out'. If he is motivated he can go on until he is 37, 38. At the moment he looks very focused, he has found a good balance in his life and is happy with his football."

Wenger, too, seems happy with life, though it appears very one-dimensional. Two years ago this month I interviewed him towards the end of his first season at Highbury. He said all he knew of London were the journeys from his house to Highbury, to the training ground, and to Heathrow. That remains the case.

Many will find this sad and a waste of his opportunities and intellect. Wenger is unconcerned. "I sacrificed everything at the start of my career for 10 years and now it has become my natural way to live. At the start of your career you sacrifice more because, not used to pressure and making decisions, you don't know if the job is for you. There is more pressure on me now but I felt it more then."

Wenger has more than fulfilled Arsenal's initial expectations but it is the nature of the game that, as success increas-



Arsène Wenger, the Arsenal manager, in positive mood yesterday as he prepared for tomorrow's FA Cup semi-final

Robert Hallam

es, so do expectations. However the next few weeks pan out, Wenger will begin next season expected to do much better in the Champions' League. Lessons, he admits, have been absorbed from this season's campaign even if the answers have not all been resolved.

"We learned many things. Maybe we were a little bit too short as a squad, maybe I underestimated suspensions would come so quickly. I think we got punished by that."

"We also underestimated the motivation of teams who come to Wembley. This is still a problem. If we qualify next season we must either go down to a capacity of 32,000 at Highbury or go to Wembley. We have not decided what to do yet and I don't know what I will say when we discuss it."

Wenger believes that English clubs, and the English game, is still suffering from the effects of the post-Heysel ban. He hoped Manchester United and

Chelsea would succeed in Europe and that would mitigate the blame he expects to be attached to the influx of foreign players should England fail to qualify for Euro 2000.

For the man who partly lost his job because of England's poor start to the European Championship campaign, Glenn Hoddle, Wenger's advice is clear: "The question is do you let time heal it or go straight away into different worries and forget about it. I

think he should go as quickly as possible into a management job, here or abroad."

"I don't think what happened to him will be a problem for his career in England. I think he can still be successful as a club manager. He is a good analyst of the game and not scared to make decisions. If you look at his record his results are good, he lost only four games with England and did well at Swindon and Chelsea."

And Eileen Drewery?

Should he reduce her influence? "That is his own choice. I do not want to interfere with his private beliefs. I had him as a player and I enjoyed working with him. He was straight, dedicated to the team, always generous. When you have such players you always want them to be successful afterwards."

However, the main thing is having players who are successful now and, as this weekend may underline, Wenger has those in abundance.

Usual suspects rule semi-final roost Charlton look to long term

ONE DAY someone will write about the true magic of the FA Cup. Not about the postman who had, as a youngster, dreamed of shining Gary Lineker's boots, or the non-League team who embarrassed their betters, but about the lasting fascination for a competition which is more predictable by the year. If you had picked four teams most likely to reach tomorrow's semi-finals you would not have run the risk of being certified if you had come up with Arsenal, Manchester United, Newcastle and Tottenham. Indeed, begging Chelsea and Leeds' pardon, they are arguably playing better than anyone else in the Premiership.

You have to go back seven years since a team from outside

BY GUY HODGSON

the top division, Sunderland, made it to Wembley and to 1976 since Southampton of the then-Second Division surprised Manchester United. Those exceptions apart, the rule has come from the usual suspects.

Tomorrow as much as any time, as the last four contains both 1998 finalists, the three most recent winners of the Double and, in Arsenal and United, the two clubs who have won the Cup five times between them in the 1990s. Why we get so excited by Oldham versus Chelsea and their likes on frozen January pitches, when we already have a good idea what is going to happen, is something that only romantics can explain.

Alex Ferguson, for example, "It just shows how little we regard the FA Cup," the United manager said, ironically, after his side had removed Liverpool with a frantic finale. "There is a magic about the Cup. It gets you going."

Phil Neville remembered United's defeat by Barnsley last year in his book, co-written with his brother Gary, *For Club and Country*. "Anyone who thought we didn't care about the FA Cup should have seen us in the dressing room or on the coach home... We were devastated."

So United will be hell-bent to beat Arsenal at Villa Park tomorrow even though the tie comes at an inconvenient point in the season, midway between their Champions' League semi-final with Juventus. Pride,

glory, you name the reason - the FA Cup still has the power to excite or despair.

United, going for a treble, will be anxious to win tomorrow no matter what team they put out and particularly as they have scores to settle with the players who are chasing them hardest in the Premiership. Until they held Arsenal to a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford in February, they had lost four consecutive games to the Gunners.

If you thought Juventus made a mess of Manchester United's vaunted reputation, particularly in the first half at Old Trafford on Wednesday, then it was not the first time this season. They were thoroughly beaten by Arsenal in the Charity Shield and lost again 3-0 at Highbury in September.

"We were outplayed," Roy Keane admitted afterwards and it was in his department, midfield, where the game was won. Patrick Vieira eclipsed the Irishman on both those occasions.

Emmanuel Petit will not be there to help his French compatriot tomorrow because he is suspended, but in a week when United have been labouring in Europe that will not be as crucial as would have been if they were fresh. Marc Overmars is a player who can exact terrible damage on tired limbs.

If United and Arsenal need no introduction then neither do Newcastle and Tottenham, who meet at Old Trafford six days after a 1-1 draw in the Premiership at St James' Park. That was a dress rehearsal without the principal actors: Alan Shearer,

David Ginola and the rest will be present tomorrow.

In the Toon Army's nightmares it is Ginola, a Newcastle idol too cavalier for the round-head Kenny Dalglish, who will spread sobbs on the Tyne and if he provides the cross that allows Les Ferdinand, another former St James' Park player, to score the winner their misery will be complete.

Leicester City employed Rob Ullathorne to man-mark the Frenchman into near irrelevance in the Worthington Cup Final at Wembley last month and Andy Griffin will probably get the task tomorrow.

"He's one of the best players in the League, without doubt," Griffin said. "In the last couple of months, he's ripped teams apart single-handedly, but it showed in the Worthington Cup final that he's only human and can be kept quiet."

If Newcastle can contain Ginola and give Dietmar Hamann the space to play his subtle passing game then they have a chance to repeat their appearance in last year's final, but it is a big "if". Tottenham have won once at Wembley this season and have more "big-game" players. Arsenal to win by a single goal and Tottenham to go through after a replay. A north London FA Cup final derby? Now that is something that has not happened before.

AFTER PULLING themselves out of the bottom three with an impressive Easter Monday victory over West Ham, Charlton are already considering leaving The Valley for a new 45,000 all-seater stadium at the Millennium Dome site in Greenwich.

Alan Curbishley, the Charlton manager, yesterday admitted that if Charlton are to survive in the Premiership, they would have to find ways of increasing the club's revenue and that involved either extending the current stadium or leaving altogether.

"A 40,000 stadium is what it takes to compete in this league," Curbishley said. "Bryan Robson is saying he's got to spend £30m to catch up with the likes of Manchester United. So how much does that leave us behind them?"

Curbishley continues the club's battle for survival at the Riverside Stadium today without the Welsh international John Robinson who sustained an ankle injury at West Ham, Boro, now clear of the relegation battle after 10 points from their last four games, are expected to have strikers Brian Deane and Alun Armstrong fit again.

The Derby manager Jim Smith is worried that seemingly

BY JASON GEE

doomed Nottingham Forest will be able to take advantage of his side's defensive frailties. Derby having conceded eight goals in their last two matches.

"We've got a situation where Forest will play with total freedom other than the fact they want the victory for their fans," said Smith. "They'll be up for it and we've got to make sure we don't allow them the silly goals we've allowed teams in the last two games."

The Southampton goalkeeper Neil Moss gets the chance to prove he can replace injury victim Paul Jones for the remaining six matches of the season as relegation haunted Saints head to Villa Park. Moss has played in the two Premiership matches since Jones suffered a back problem while playing for Wales that will keep him out of contention for the rest of the season.

The West Ham striker Ian Wright could make his first Premiership appearance for more than three months at Leicester. Wright, whose last game was on 28 December, came through 45 minutes of a reserve game in midweek and will take his place on the bench at Filbert Street.

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Fowler given six-match suspension

ROBBIE FOWLER intends to appeal against the six-match suspension he was given by a Football Association disciplinary commission yesterday for both his "cocaine snorting" goal celebration during the Merseyside derby last weekend and his fracas with Graeme Le Saux last month.

The three-man panel, who met in Birmingham, ordered a four-match suspension for the Liverpool striker's goal celebration against Everton, when he knelt with a finger to one side of his nose and pretended to snort the goal line. He was also given a record £32,000 fine, which equates to a week's wages and matches the fine independently imposed by Liverpool.

In addition he picked up a two-game ban for his dispute with Le Saux during Liverpool's Premiership match at Chelsea. During those exchanges, Fowler wiggled his backside at the Chelsea defender and taunted him about his sexuality. Le Saux, who was also charged with misconduct after reacting by cuffing the Liverpool man on the back of the head, was banned for one match and fined £5,000.

The suspensions are due to take effect from 24 April, but Fowler intends to contest his ban, which means it will be deferred. His legal representative, Kevin Dooley, said the appeal process had been put in motion.

"It is my view that I should express disappointment on behalf of the player about what I

believe to be an unjust and disproportionate sentence. We will be appealing to the FA against what we believe is clearly an unjust sentence," Dooley said.

Neither Le Saux or Fowler, who were dealt with separately by a panel headed by the FA vice chairman, Barry Bright, would comment after the hearing which lasted five hours.

The FA's interim executive director, David Davies, delivered a lengthy statement in which he said both players had admitted misconduct, adding that Le Saux did not seek to justify what he had done in hitting Fowler.

"[Le Saux] didn't condone violence of any kind and suffered what he called a torrent of abuse from a fellow professional, the origins of which were totally untrue and long-standing allegations that he was gay," Davies said in the statement.

"For his part Robbie Fowler denied saying or doing anything that was intended to question the sexuality of Graeme Le Saux but on his behalf was accepted that he had acted inappropriately in his behaviour at Stamford Bridge.

"As far as last Saturday was concerned, he said his actions had been spontaneous and instinctive. He had only realised how stupid they were several hours later. He had suffered for several years in his home city

of Liverpool from totally untrue and damaging allegations of drug-taking."

Fowler agreed this week to assist the Merseyside police with their anti-drugs programme, Davies said.

Explaining the size of the fine, the statement said that the panel considered highly paid internationalists to be role models. "They are also human beings whose behaviour sometimes falls below the standards expected of them," the statement said. "But mutual respect for each other is the absolute minimum requirement. The FA has an anti-discrimination policy and a commitment to fight drugs abuse which are well known and highly regarded."

Liverpool's manager, Gerard Houllier, who initially dismissed Fowler's goal celebration as a joke, escaped punishment when the same panel ruled he had no case to answer over his criticism of Mike Reid for his refereeing of Liverpool's Premiership game with Charlton on 13 February.

The French contingent in English football could be expanded by the arrival of Zinedine Zidane next season. According to the Italian sports daily *Corriere dello Sport*, the world player of the year will leave Juventus at the end of the season to join either Manchester United or a Spanish club. The paper claimed Manchester United had already made a bid for Zidane, whose contract with



Liverpool's Robbie Fowler arrives at Birmingham City's ground for his disciplinary hearing yesterday

Saxton: No rest for the leaders

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL
BY STEVEN BAKER

SUNDERLAND ENTER today's home game with Huddersfield knowing that a win would achieve a record sequence of 12 successive home League victories, and bring them within one point of being mathematically certain of Premiership football next season.

Despite that, their assistant manager, Bobby Saxton, is refusing to let his players rest on their laurels. "We've come on strong in the last few games and the message is we must keep it going for the rest of the season," he said. "It's no good pulling the stumps up with six games to go; we have to do it all the way."

At Valley Parade third-placed Bradford City need a win over Portsmouth to move above Ipswich, who visit their East Anglian rivals Norwich tomorrow. The Bantams' assistant manager, Chris Hutchings, said: "We had two good wins over Easter but we know that it will count for nothing if we don't maintain our form until the end of the season."

Wolves are again without Robbie Keane, who is with the Republic of Ireland's Under-20 team in Nigeria, for the home game with Crystal Palace but their assistant manager John Ward is delighted with how the players have responded to the loss of the young striker. "We've won two and drawn one of our last three games," Ward said. "The way everyone has rallied and responded to our top scorer leaving has been first class."

Bolton visit Watford in a match vital to the play-off hopes of both teams, with the Wanderers' manager, Colin Todd, urging his side to step up their work rate after slipping from second to sixth place in recent months. "We know we've hit a bit of a brick wall at the moment... but I want 10 to 15 per cent extra effort from my players."

At the other end of the table, the Crewe manager, Dario Gradi, is hoping his side can build on their 5-1 demolition of West Bromwich on Monday and move out of the bottom three by beating Port Vale at home. "Port Vale will be much more defensive and it will be harder for us to score goals," Gradi warned. "The West Brom midfield was attacking rather than defending; I don't think Vale's midfield will be like that."

The bottom club, Bristol City, have a crucial home match with Grimsby and their coach, Benny Lennartsson, is confident his side can beat the drop. Victories against Port Vale and Portsmouth have given City new hope and Lennartsson said: "This is the biggest game of our season and the great escape is still possible. 'We've all been working hard and the mood of the team is still good.'"

Milan have a score to settle with Parma

PARMA, ONLY fourth in Serie A but with their tails up after their 3-1 victory at Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their UEFA Cup semi-final on Tuesday, promise to pose problems for Milan, their hosts, in tomorrow's live Channel 4 game at San Siro.

Parma, eight points behind Lazio, the leaders, with only seven games to play, have probably blown their *scudetto* hopes after a superb spell earlier in the season, which included a 4-0 drubbing of Milan at Parma. Milan, third in Serie A, a point ahead of Parma, have picked up since and showed their newly-acquired grit by holding Lazio to a 0-0 draw at the Olympic stadium last Saturday.

This promises to be an open game as Alberto Zaccaroni and Alberto Maestani, the coaches of Milan and Parma, both favour the attacking 3-4-3 formation which has helped open up Serie A this term.

Up front, Parma can perm

any three from Enrico Chiesa, the Italian international, and the Argentinians Hernan Crespo, Abel Balbo and Juan Sebastian Veron, their playmaker.

Milan, however, can call on Oliver Bierhoff, the German international whose awesome aerial presence terrorises Serie A defences wherever he goes, the Brazilian Leonardo, the Liberian George Weah and Mauricio Ganz.

Milan will be without Demetrio Albertini and the German Christian Ziege (both injured) while the Dane Thomas Helveg is suspended. Parma have the French midfielder Alain Boghossian back from injury.

FACTSHEET (league positions in brackets): Milan (3); Lazio (4); Fiorentina (5); Juventus (6); Inter Milan (7); Roma (8); AC Milan (9); Fiorentina (10); Lazio (11); Parma (12); Fiorentina (13); Lazio (14); Fiorentina (15); Lazio (16); Lazio (17); Lazio (18); Lazio (19); Lazio (20); Lazio (21); Lazio (22); Lazio (23); Lazio (24); Lazio (25); Lazio (26); Lazio (27); Lazio (28); Lazio (29); Lazio (30); Lazio (31); Lazio (32); Lazio (33); Lazio (34); Lazio (35); Lazio (36); Lazio (37); Lazio (38); Lazio (39); Lazio (40); Lazio (41); Lazio (42); Lazio (43); Lazio (44); Lazio (45); Lazio (46); Lazio (47); Lazio (48); Lazio (49); Lazio (50); Lazio (51); Lazio (52); Lazio (53); Lazio (54); Lazio (55); Lazio (56); Lazio (57); Lazio (58); Lazio (59); Lazio (60); Lazio (61); Lazio (62); Lazio (63); Lazio (64); Lazio (65); Lazio (66); Lazio (67); Lazio (68); Lazio (69); Lazio (70); Lazio (71); Lazio (72); Lazio (73); Lazio (74); Lazio (75); Lazio (76); Lazio (77); Lazio (78); Lazio (79); Lazio (80); 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(227) J Sheehan 53.95 A Clark 13
(228) M's N Macaulay 53.2 R Price 10 V
(2) M Poligase 48.13 D Holland 8 B
(3) B Baugh 48.7 TG McLaughlin 3
(4) D Chapman 68.0 A Cuthens 9
..... Jme 48.6 N Collan 25
(4) D Arbutnot 56.6 S Whitworth 7 V
JND (3) S Bowring 48.1 J Cuthms 5
..... Sencor 58.0 R Lappin 2
(1) J Nevill 57.3 A Mackay 12
(4) R Holmstead 47.2 P M Gunn 7 (1)
3 discarded
-1 Strat's Quest, 9-2 Mike's Double, 7-1
Daly, Schmelling Sound, 12-1 others

IN VERDICT
went then JOHN BOWDLER MUSIC
on the AWB and he may be able
Strat's Quest and Dahliids.

Grand National colours and form

3.45
BBC1

1 2-11FP SUNY BAY (23) 10yo 11st 13lb.....G Bradley 12-1

Owner: Uplands Bloodstock. Trainer: S Sherwood.
No grey has won the Grand National since Nicolas Silver in 1981 but this fellow has gone closer than most, finishing runner-up to Lord Glylene and Earth Summit in the last two runnings. After a promising start this season, he fell when very tired in Ireland at Christmas and was outpaced in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time. Has an each-way chance.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 149



2 61-1F6 GENERAL WOLFE (42) (BF) 10yo 11st 1lb.....N Williamson 14-1

Owner: The Winning Line. Trainer: Miss Venetia Williams.
Useful chaser, whose talented trainer promises to be the next Jerry Pitman, and won the Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock over three miles on his seasonal debut. However, he was tired when falling at the last fence and then faded to finish sixth on his two subsequent runs (both over 3 1/2 miles) and might have stamina limitations. Needs softer ground.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 143



3 1-12P0 EARTH SUMMIT (77) (CD) 11yo 11st.....C Llewellyn B 16-1

Owner: The Summit Partnership. Trainer: N Twiston-Davies.
Won last year's Grand National, having won the Scottish National at Ayr in 1994 and the Welsh National at Chepstow in 1997. In form early in the season and, although he has disappointed on his two most recent runs, it could be a mistake to write him off - he was well beaten in both his outings prior to winning last year. Best on heavy ground.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 151



4 3P-1PP COOME HILL (105) 10yo 10st 11lb.....S Wynne 25-1

Owner: Mrs JH Dennis. Trainer: W Dennis.
Winner of the 1996 Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury but has had training problems since - he has had a soft palate operation and missed much of last season because of heat in the leg. He seemed back to form when winning over three miles at Ascot in November but has disappointed since. Could go well if he stays this marathon distance.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 146



5 2P-4P4 CYBORGO (42) 9yo 10st 11lb.....C O'Dwyer B 50-1

Owner: County Stores Somerset Holdings Ltd. Trainer: M Pipe.
Formerly a high-class hurdler (won 1996 Stayers' Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival) and chaser but went lame in the 1998 Cheltenham Gold Cup and has looked a shadow of his former self this season. He often makes the running and, a thorough stayer and a sound jumper, he would have every chance if he recovered his best form.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 135



6 3-24D EUDIPE (42) (BF) 7yo 10st 10lb.....A P McCoy B-1

Owner: D A Johnson. Trainer: M Pipe.
This talented youngster has run some good races this season, finishing second to Teeton Mill in the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury and fourth to Kendal Cavalier in the Welsh National at Chepstow before winning at Sandown. He disappointed at Haydock last time but stays and jumps well and has sound prospects if he returns to form.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 144



7 12-14 DOUBLE THRILLER (23) 9yo 10st 8lb.....J Tizzard 9-2

Owner: R C Wilkins. Trainer: P Nicholls.
This big, strong former hunter chaser - he beat the high-class Teeton Mill in that sphere last season - scored impressive victories at Wincanton this term before finishing a disappointing 32 lengths fourth to See More Business in the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Is a short price for a horse who is unproven beyond 3 1/2 miles and can make mistakes.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 155



8 P-PF35 ADDINGTON BOY (23) 11yo 10st 7lb.....A Maguire B-1

Owner: Golt Foods Ltd. Trainer: F Murphy.
A very smart performer for the late Gordon Richards two years ago, but reportedly endured a traumatic accident at his stables and has not been the same since. Has run a bit better this season and was just behind Double Thriller when fifth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup last time and will go on the ground, but is not sure to stay and can make mistakes.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 144



9 11P2P2 TAMARINDO (25) 6yo 10st 4lb.....T J Murphy 65-1

Owner: D A Johnson. Trainer: M Pipe.
Precocious (prior to this year's rule change, the National was for seven-year-olds and upwards only) French-bred who won his first two races over fences despite being asked to tackle Cheltenham's toughest obstacles. Disappointing since, unproven beyond three miles and tends to jump to his left, but would be an interesting outsider if returning to form.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 149



10 F-3222 FIDDLING THE FACTS (42) (BF) 8yo 10st 3lb.....M A Fitzgerald 9-1

Owner: Mrs E Roberts. Trainer: N Henderson.
Very tough mare who has been a big-race bridesmaid this season, finishing second to Kendal Cavalier in the 3 1/2-mile Welsh National at Chepstow and runner-up to Young Kerry in the Greenalls Grand National at Haydock last time. Stays very well - and is effective in the mud - but is not the best of jumpers and that has to be a major worry.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 142



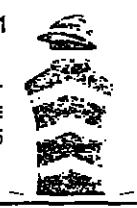
11 51-31P BARONET (21) 9yo 10st 2lb.....R Johnson 16-1

Owner: Mrs David Thompson. Trainer: D Nicholson.
This grey stayer won the Scottish National over four miles and a furlong at Ayr last year and looked better than ever when winning over the same trip at Cheltenham in January. However, he was never going well and was pulled up in the Midlands National behind Young Kerry and Call It A Day at Uttoxeter last time and his jumping is far from fluent.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 141



12 2P4432 CALL IT A DAY (21) 9yo 10st.....R Dunwoody 6-1

Owner: Mrs Jane Lane. Trainer: D Nicholson.
Smart chaser who won the Whitbread Gold Cup at Sandown last season and was runner-up to Young Kerry in the Midlands National over 4 1/2 miles at Uttoxeter last time. Stays and jumps well and, with dual National winner Richard Dunwoody (on West Tip in 1985 and Minnehoma in 1994) in the saddle, he looks the one they all have to beat.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 156



13 13P-0 BELLS LIFE (24) (C) 10yo 10st.....G Tormey 65-1

Owner: R Gibbs. Trainer: P Hobbs.
Lightly-raced sort who showed he handles these fences when winning the Lord Hughes Chase over 2 1/2 miles here in 1997. Not badly handicapped on his best form - and the sort to be up there disputing the lead for the first circuit - but showed little on his seasonal debut and may be backpedalling at the business end of the race.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 145



14 53P-P AVRO ANSON (F15) 11yo 10st.....A Dobbin 100-1

Owner: Axon. Trainer: Miss J A Carrasco.
Tall, but slightly-butt sort, who was a top-class hurdler and a useful chaser, but was never jumping fluently when a well-beaten sixth in the 1997 Grand National and has shown little since. Finished unplaced on the Flat - form figures are for jump races only - at Doncaster last week. Not sure to stay this distance either but will retain the decent ground.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 142



15 1-25P KENDAL CAVALIER (63) 9yo 10st.....B Panton 20-1

Owner: Michael Wingfield Digby. Trainer: N Hawke.
Tough stayer who won the Welsh National at Chepstow last December beating Fiddling The Facts by half a length but was pulled up on his last outing at Uttoxeter. Stays extremely well (he is best on heavy ground) and jumps soundly, but carries 5lb more than his true handicap weight and his best form still leaves him with something to find to win this.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 139



16 4-52P3 NAHTHEN LAD (25) 10yo 10st.....A Thornton B 14-1

Owner: J Shaw. Trainer: Mrs J Pitman.
Smart chaser on his day who finished third to Betty's Boy in the National Hunt Chase at the Cheltenham Festival. However, he fell at the 11th fence in last year's National and only ninth to Lord Glylene in 1997, and carries 7lb more than his true handicap weight. His trainer has won this race twice - Corbiere (1963) and Royal Athlete (1995).
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 143



17 1-0-40 MUDAHIM (42) 13yo 10st.....B Powell B 100-1

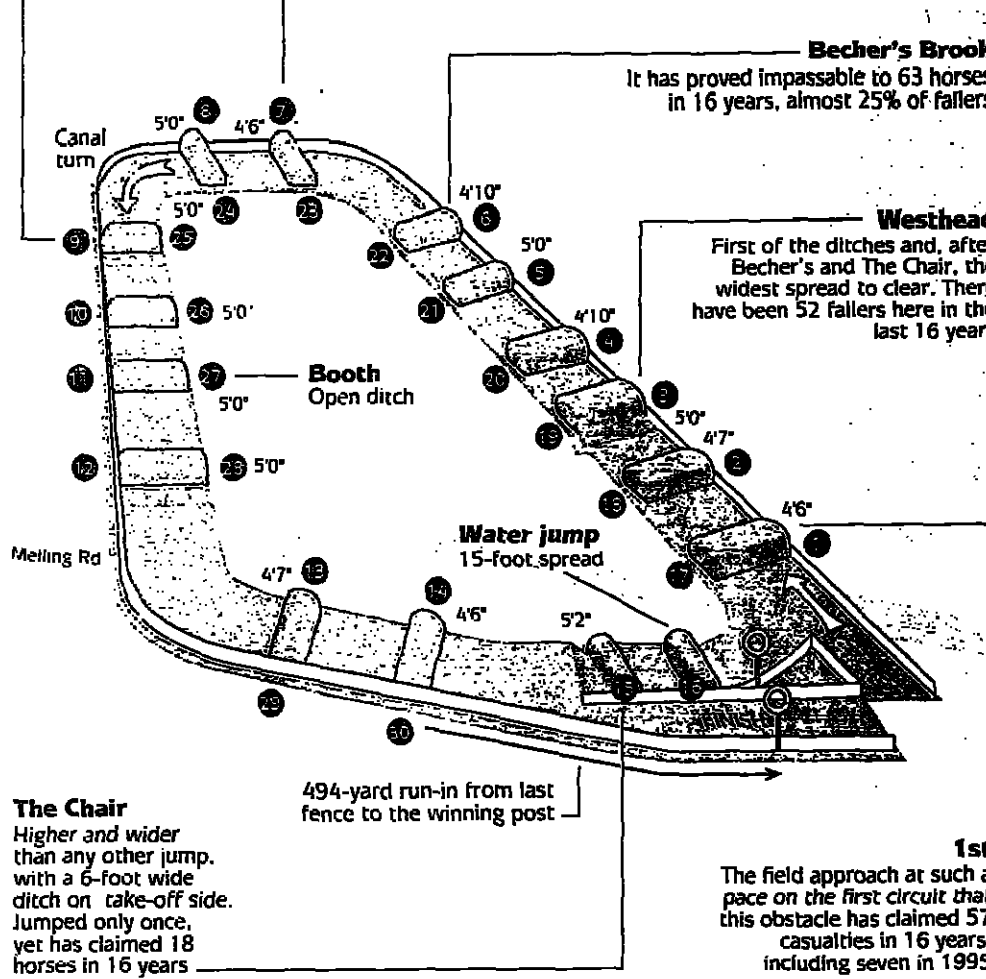
Owner: Silvio Gennari. Trainer: P Hobbs.
Won the 1997 Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse when trained by Jenny Pitman but was injured on his only outing last season and has appeared in decline on both starts for his new yard this term. Stays and jumps soundly and effectively on any going but is not getting any younger and has tough task, carrying 8lb more than his true handicap mark.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 103



THE AINTREE COURSE

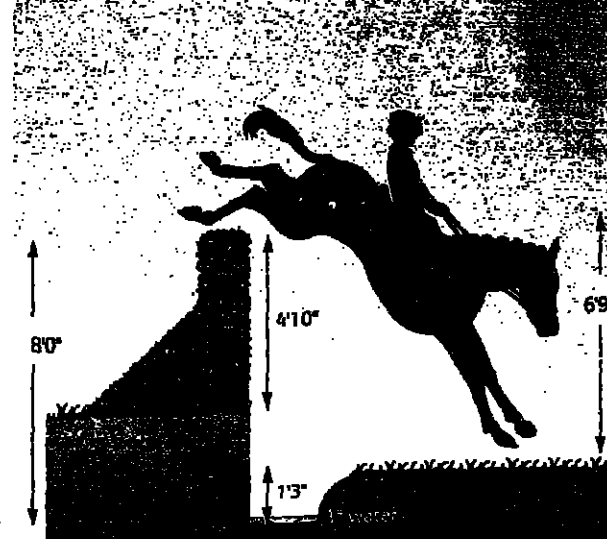
Valentine's Brook

The twin of Becher's, but with far less impact. Only six have gone here in 15 years.



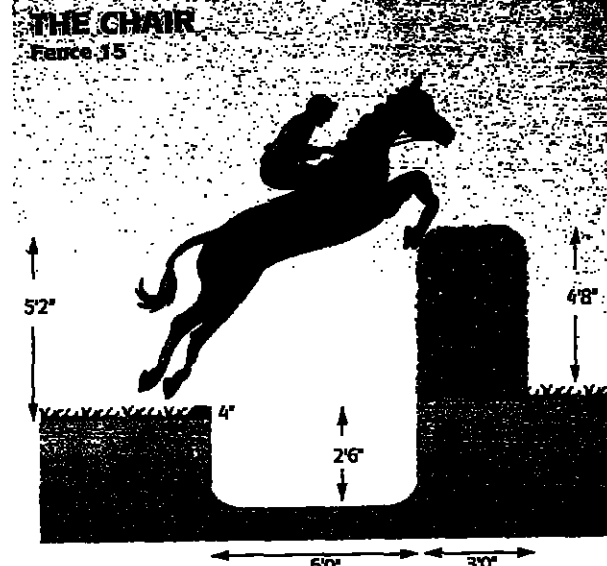
BECHER'S BROOK

Fences 18 and 22



THE CHAIR

Fence 15



HOW TO READ THE FORM

Form this season	Form last season	Form this season	Form last season	Form this season	Form last season
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th
19th	20th	21st	22nd	23rd	24th
25th	26th	27th	28th	29th	30th
31st	32nd	33rd	34th	35th	36th
37th	38th	39th	40th	41st	42nd
43rd	44th	45th	46th	47th	48th
49th	50th	51st	52nd	53rd	54th
55th	56th	57th	58th	59th	60th
61st	62nd	63rd	64th	65th	66th
67th	68th	69th	70th	71st	72nd
73rd	74th	75th	76th	77th	78th
79th	80th	81st	82nd	83rd	84th
85th	86th	87th	88th	89th	90th
91st	92nd	93rd	94th	95th	96th
97th	98th	99th	100th	101st	102nd
103rd	104th	105th	106th	107th	108th
109th	110th	111st	112nd	113th	114th
115th	116th	117th	118th	119th	120th
121st	122nd	123rd	124th	125th	126th
127th	128th	129th	130th	131st	132nd
133rd	134th	135th	136th	137th	138th
139th	140th	141st	142nd	143rd	144th
145th	146th	147th	148th	149th	150th
151st	152nd	153rd	154th	155th	156th
157th	158th	159th	160th	161st	162nd
163rd	164th	165th	166th	167th	168th
169th	170th	171st	172nd	173rd	174th
175th	176th	177th	178th	179th	180th
181st	182nd	183rd	184th	185th	186th
187th	188th	189th	190th	191st	192nd
193rd	194th	195th	196th	197th	198th
199th	200th	201st	202nd	203rd	204th
205th	206th	207th	208th	209th	210th
211st	212nd	213th	214th	215th	216th
217th	218th	219th	220th	221st	222nd
223rd	224th	225th	226th	227th	228th
229th	230th	231st	232nd	233rd	234th
235th	236th	237th	238th	239th	240th
241st	242nd	243rd	244th	245th	246th
247th	248th	249th	250th	251st	252nd
253rd	254th	255th	256th	257th	258th
259th	260th	261st	262nd	263rd	264th
265th	266th	267th	268th	269th	270th
271st	272nd	273rd	274th	275th	276th
277th	278th	279th	280th	281st	282nd
283rd	284th	285th	286th	287th	288th
289th	290th	291st	292nd	293rd	294th
295th	296th	297th	298th	299th	300th

18 6-22FF SAMLEE (103) (C) 10yo 10st.....R Farrant B 40-1

Owner: White Lion Partnership. Trainer: P Hobbs.
Slow stayer who plodded on to finish third of six finishers to Earth Summit in last year's National on heavy ground. Finished second of three finishers to same rival in the Becher Chase here in November but was pulled up behind Kendal Cavalier in the Welsh National at last time. Not a fluent jumper, and must carry 10lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 135



19 500541 BOBBYJO (24) 9yo 10st.....P Carberry 18-1

Owner: Robert Burke. Trainer: T Carberry (Ir).
Useful Irish chaser who won the Irish Grand National at Fairyhouse last year and showed he is coming to hand when winning over hurdles at Down Royal recently. Stays 3 1/2 miles well and a sound jumper, he could go well if he lasts the extra distance, but has no more than plain claims carrying a stone more than his true handicap weight.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 136



20 42U-0P BRAVE HIGHLANDER (38) 11yo 10st.....P Hide 65-1

Owner: S N J Embros. Trainer: J Gifford.
Lightly raced over the years but won at Wincanton and Folliscombe last season and was going well in fifth place when unseating his rider in last year's National at the Canal Turn second time round. Disappointing on his only run this term at Chepstow and carries 16lb more than his true handicap weight but might just reach the frame if he gets round.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 123



21 16-422 BLUE CHARM (28) 9yo 10st.....L Wyer 40-1

Owner: Mrs M C Lindsay. Trainer: Mrs S Bradburne.
Fair sort, won at Aintree (but not over the National fences) in November and has run consistently since but is unproven beyond three miles and a furlong and carries 16lb more than his true handicap weight. Likely to race up with the pace for the first circuit but odds-on to be struggling in the final mile.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 125



22 43-6F4 COMMERCIAL ARTIST (21) 13yo 10st.....T Jenks 300-1

Owner: L A Morgan. Trainer: D McCan.
Once useful Irish veteran who had a soft palate operation, is lightly-raced nowadays, a back jumper and is over the hill. He trained produced Red Rum to win the Grand National a record three times in the 1970s, but the chances of this fellow, who carries 17lb more than his true handicap weight, outracing Ginger back in the twilight are remote.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 100



23 4-42B FRAZER ISLAND (25) 10yo 10st.....R Guest 100-1

Owner: Dr B Alexander. Trainer: R Rowe.
Was fourth to Coffer Vada in the John Hughes Chase over 2 1/2 miles over these fences last year and was given too much to do when seventh in the Great Yorkshire Chase at Doncaster in January, however, brought down last time. He is unproven beyond three miles and a furlong, makes mistakes and carries 17lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 134



24 4P-840 STRONG CHAIRMAN (25) 8yo 10st.....R Thornton 66-1

Owner: Hunt & Co Bournemouth Ltd. Trainer: P Nicholls.
Big strong sort from an excellent stable who finished a promising runner-up at Cheltenham on his seasonal debut and was returning from a lay-off when unplaced in the Kim Mur Chase for amateur riders at the Cheltenham Festival. Stays, but makes mistakes needs soft ground and must shoulder 12lb more than his true handicap weight.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 123



25 2024F6 MERRY PEOPLE (30) 11yo 10st.....G Cotter 150-1

Owner: Karl Casey. Trainer: J Quagly (Ir).
Inconsistent Irish chaser, who has been in poor form of late. His jumping is fluent but he only stays three miles and must carry a gigantic 21lb more than his true handicap weight. Escaped in 1975 was the last Irish-trained horse to win the Grand National and the chances of this fellow emulating that former dual Cheltenham Gold Cup winner are slim.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 126



26 63-4-4 CAMELOT KNIGHT (28) 13yo 10st.....C Maude 150-1

Owner: Michael Gates. Trainer: N Twiston-Davies.
Finished third to Lord Glylene in the 1997 Grand National (when carrying 21lb more than his true handicap weight), but is lightly raced and in decline, finishing tailed off at Chepstow on his only run this season. He stays and jumps well but, carrying 22lb more than his true weight today, is too long in the tooth to again appear in Mission Impossible.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 100

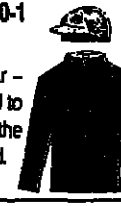


PREVIOUS NATIONAL WINNERS

1998: Earth Summit 7-1	1985: Last Suspect 50-1
1997: Lord Glylene 16-1	1984: Hello Dandy 13-1
1996: Rough Quest 7-1	1983: Corbiere 13-1
1995: Royal Athlete 40-1	1982: Gritter 7-1
1994: Minnehoma 16-1	1981: Aldaniti 10-1
1993: Void race	1980: Ben Nevis 40-1
1992: Party Politics 14-1	1979: Rubstic 25-1
1991: Seagram 12-1	1978: Lucius 14-1
1990: Mr Frisk 16-1	1977: Red Rum 9-1
1989: Little Polver 28-1	1976: Rag Trade 14-1
1988: Rhyme 'N' Reason 10-1	1975: L'Escargot 13-2
1987: Maori Venture 28-1	1974: Red Rum 11-1
1986: West Tip 15-2	1973: Red Rum 9-1

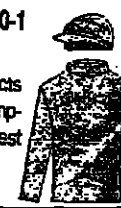
27 2F2350 CAVALERO (21) (C) 10yo 10st.....S Curran 50-1

Owner: H J Manners. Trainer: H Manners.
Ex-hunter chaser - he won over 2 1/2 miles over these fences in that sphere last year - who has shown form in handicaps this season. However, he has fallen this term, failed to stay when unplaced in the Midlands National at Uttoxeter last time out and needs the mud. Carrying 23lb more than his true handicap weight, he can be safely discounted.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 129



28 13-P40 CASTLE COIN (29) 7yo 10st.....A S Smith 200-1

Owner: J Howard Johnson. Trainer: J Howard Johnson.
Won at Cork and Sedgefield last season but has shown little form this time around. Acts on any going but has yet to prove himself beyond three miles and a furlong and his jumping is suspect. Carrying 29lb more than his true handicap weight, it will be the biggest shock since Foinavon (100-1) profited from the pile-up in 1967 if this one wins.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 132



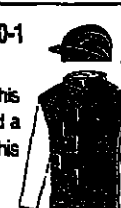
29 4-PR041 CHOISTY (17) 9yo 10st.....R Widger 150-1

Owner: F J Sansbury. Trainer: H Haynes.
Fell at Becher's Brook first time round in last year's Grand National and out of form until winning at Chepstow last time out. Stays really well but needs soft going, tends to make mistakes and is set to carry a huge 30lb more than his true handicap weight. Now he has recaptured his form, he should go on to win more races - but not this one.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 132



30 12P34 FEELS LIKE GOLD (36) (BF) 11yo 10st.....B Harding 150-1

Owner: Independent Twine Manufacturing Co Ltd. Trainer: N Richards.
Fair stayer who won at Kelso on his seasonal debut but has been inconsistent since, his best effort being when third to Holybank Buck in the Ebor Chase over four miles and a furlong at Newcastle. Stays really well, but best in the mud and, with 30lb more than his true handicap weight, would need a pile-up in order to even be placed.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 116



31 4-P403 ST MELLION FAIRWAY (32) 10yo 10st.....J Frost 150-1

Owner: St Mellon Estates Ltd. Trainer: M Pipe.
Once useful chaser who plugged on dourly to finish a remote fourth in last year's Grand National on heavy ground. Has run moderately well this season, finishing well beaten at Exeter last time. Stays well but has a lot to do, carrying 32lb more than his true handicap weight and, on good ground, is unlikely to find only three in front of him at the finish this year.
Going: Distance: Jumping: Rating 109



Boy can complete man's job

IT'S A FRIGHTENING race the Grand National. Daunting for horse and jockey, worrying for bookmakers for whom this is the biggest single pay day of the year.

Trepidation is most keenly felt though by the organisers who seek to shepherd the event away from controversy. They could carpet this part of Merseyside in mattresses, but you can never get away from the fact that this is a race of peril. It is what makes the race captivating, the most stirring as well as the most valuable jumping race on the globe.

The soothing suggestion for the executive, however, is that the 152nd running of the Grand National may transpire to be one of the safest marathons ever conducted.

The field has dwindled to the

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Nap: Addington Boy
(Aintree 3.45)
NB: Shinkar
(Aintree 1.45)

manageable proportions of 32 horses and they will compete over terrain conducive to preserving their good health. After a dry night on the Lancashire coast the going was amended to good (with good to soft patches). That means the competitors will not have to pick their way through a quagmire. Neither will they be bouncing along on dangerously firm ground. It all looks rather promising.

The National is forever a race for drama, and the only surprise is that Lassie is yet to win it. The result which screams out for the romantics today is success for Nahthen Lad and, more pertinently, success for Jenny Pitman.

The Grand National does not usually start until Jenny arrives, but they will have to think of a way to crank the

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON
Racing Correspondent

meeting alive next year. Mrs P. OBE, retires at the end of the season, taking with her the memories of Corbiere and Royal Athlete scooting victoriously around these lanes.

Forests may be quivering as Nahthen Lad is by no means a social runner. There is a chance his trainer's name will, once again, be splashed at either end of the newspapers, magazines and pull-outs.

The jockey with the most notable pedigree in the race is Richard Dunwoody, a winner on both West Tip and Minihoma. National Hunt racing's most prolific rider has selected Call It A Day as his transportation today, and, again, this is not a name to throw away if it is printed on your sweep ticket. The nine-year-old exhibits his best only when the daffodils are out and there was much to like about his latest effort behind Young Kenny in the Midlands Grand National at Uttoxeter.

The most worried horse must be Fiddling The Facts. The only mare goes into the race on the back of a turbulent recent record for her trainer, Nicky Henderson. The last three of her National predecessors to emerge from Seven Barrows have all capitulated at the first fence.

Fiddling The Facts is a reliable consideration to carry her favour a bit further than that, but the drying ground is going against this steadiest of mares. A similar remark applies to

OUR EXPERTS' VIEWS ON THE NATIONAL

RICHARD EDMONDSON
1. ADDINGTON BOY
2. Double Thriller
3. Call It A Day
4. Nahthen Lad
Best longshot: Bella Life



Soap star: Double Thriller causes a splash after a workout at his Somerset stables and is the short-priced favourite for today's Grand National

Edward Whittaker

Earth Summit, the reigning champion, and Kendal Cavalier. The latter is another possible storybook theme as his trainer, Nigel Hawke, won this contest in a different life when guiding home Seagram in 1991.

While Bella Life, who has won over these fences and just creeps into the handicap proper, stands out as the best outsider, the race to ferret out our winner is the Cheltenham Gold Cup. It has been a rather futile exercise in the past selecting a horse from the Blue Riband to win a National as the Gold Cup is such a debilitating contest

like Double Thriller, who has one fewer outing in his logbook, has had the National on his agenda for some time. Double Thriller himself is such a huge and intimidating horse that it is almost possible to feel sorry for the great spruce mounds he will crash through. Almost.

What hurts most about Double Thriller though is his price. Because of liabilities running on from the Lincoln he is down to as short as 7-2 with William Hill, which would be laughable were the mission he was being sent on not so daunting.

The former hunter will doubtless be near the head of what should be a rather swollen field swarming back from the dead fields of Liverpool. He may not, though, be the outsider. That honour should belong to a horse with a juvenile name for a man's task. Take the value and go with ADDINGTON BOY (nap 3.45).

Road Racer for a flyer

BY GREG WOOD

There is no Pridwell this year, and while Stretarez, a Group winner on the Flat but unraced over hurdles, is a interesting recruit, he could hardly start with a more difficult assignment. Istabraq will start at short odds, but racegoers can at least profit spiritually from the chance to see one of the finest hurdlers since the War.

Financial benefits should by then have been garnered from the opening races. In the handicap hurdle, Toto Tescato will be popular after his third in Cheltenham's County Hurdle, but there is also much to like about ROAD RACER (nap 1.45).

He was a disappointment at Cheltenham, pulled up when

talled off in the same race, but was rejuvenated by a visor on fast ground at Newbury two weeks ago. If the headgear has a similar effect today, he is a sporting 8-1 chance to beat 12 rivals, including Dr Jazz, who looks too short a price.

The interesting names in the two-mile handicap chase are Green Green Desert, who was a rogue on the Flat, and Edelweis Du Moulin. Green Green Desert ran fourth in the Champion Chase at Cheltenham but often does well without winning. Edelweis Du Moulin (next best 2.20), though, is a winner and proved it by taking the last race here yesterday.

BETTING: 2.55; Total: 4-6 Istabraq, 7-2 French Holly, 7-10 Don't Bet, 12-1 Mister Morose, 20-1 Jenny Pitman, 33-1 Mid Night Legend

1.45 ROAD RACER (nap)
2.20 Green Desert (nb)
2.55 Istabraq

3.45 Coome Hill
4.35 Extra Stout
5.15 Golden Alpha

GOING: National & Hurdles - Good (Good to Soft in places); Midway track - Good. 20-40 yards, 100-120 yards, 150-200 yards, 250-300 yards, 350-400 yards, 450-500 yards, 550-600 yards, 650-700 yards, 750-800 yards, 850-900 yards, 950-1000 yards, 1050-1100 yards, 1150-1200 yards, 1250-1300 yards, 1350-1400 yards, 1450-1500 yards, 1550-1600 yards, 1650-1700 yards, 1750-1800 yards, 1850-1900 yards, 1950-2000 yards, 2050-2100 yards, 2150-2200 yards, 2250-2300 yards, 2350-2400 yards, 2450-2500 yards, 2550-2600 yards, 2650-2700 yards, 2750-2800 yards, 2850-2900 yards, 2950-3000 yards, 3050-3100 yards, 3150-3200 yards, 3250-3300 yards, 3350-3400 yards, 3450-3500 yards, 3550-3600 yards, 3650-3700 yards, 3750-3800 yards, 3850-3900 yards, 3950-4000 yards, 4050-4100 yards, 4150-4200 yards, 4250-4300 yards, 4350-4400 yards, 4450-4500 yards, 4550-4600 yards, 4650-4700 yards, 4750-4800 yards, 4850-4900 yards, 4950-5000 yards, 5050-5100 yards, 5150-5200 yards, 5250-5300 yards, 5350-5400 yards, 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yards, 68950-69000 yards,

SPORT

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Football: United's future uncertain after buy-out blocked

Fans' delight as Sky falls in

AS MANCHESTER UNITED supporters toasted yesterday's government decision to block Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB bid for the club as "a victory for football", question marks arose over the future ownership of the Old Trafford side.

Michael Crick, a spokesman for the Shareholders United Against Murdoch, one of the groups which campaigned against the bid, said that the SUAM now want to explore the possibility of setting up a trust to combine the shares owned by Manchester United fans. He added that his group wanted an urgent meeting with the club's board to discuss the future ownership of the club.

Whether or not such a meeting materialises, the position of United's chairman, Martin Edwards, will now come under scrutiny, as will the viability or otherwise of another company stepping in to make a bid for the club. Edwards' failure to sell the club to Sky may not necessarily prevent him from selling it to another interested party, whether it be a broadcaster or a company from commercial sector such as corporate entertainment.

For the moment, supporters' groups are celebrating yesterday's decision. "The announcement is not just a tremendous victory for the fans of Manchester United, but a vic-

BY NICK HARRIS

tory for football," Andy Walsh, chairman of the Manchester United Independent Supporters Association, said.

"Back at the beginning of September when the takeover was made public, nobody gave us a snowball's chance in hell of blocking the bid.

"But, through a passionate belief in the need for Manchester United to remain independent, we have succeeded. That is due to the overwhelm-

INSIDE

Why BSkyB bid was rejected

Page 6

What next for Murdoch

Page 7

Leading article

Review, Page 3

ing opposition of the majority of Manchester United fans.

"United fans from all over the world have contacted us to voice their opposition and offer their support.

"But we could not have done this on our own and we have had support from fans all over the country, from Slough Town to Newcastle United, and that is why this is a victory for football. Our feeling is one of absolute euphoria. This is great for us and for anyone fighting for the independence of their club."

IMUSA's vice-chairman Steve Briscoe added: "There was the arrogance of the actual taking over, saying it was for the good of the fans."

"Mark Booth (Sky's chief executive) couldn't name the players on the plaque who died at Munich; he doesn't know the history of the club."

"As we argued to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, football is totally different. It's not a soap brand - you can't go and watch another team like Liverpool. It's football and Manchester United is what matters."

For the moment, it is likely to be business as usual at Old Trafford. Fears of proprietorial interference have subsided and although the club will not have the forecast extra millions to spend, it remains the richest in the world and in a dominant position in English football.

Paul Richards, of the SUAM, said: "I think this has drawn a line in the sand. All those media conglomerates who've been planning to take over clubs have to go back to the drawing board. We're now going to push for a place for grassroots fans to be on the board because we need to make sure football is run in the eyes of everyone, including fans, and not just those who stand to make money."

The question of whether United will be taken over by another company is unlikely to remain unanswered for too long. The Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers said:

"The MMC's findings are based mainly on competition grounds where they concluded that the merger would adversely affect competition between broadcasters." His statement does not rule out, per se, the possibility of broadcasters other than Sky, or indeed any other large company, coming in with a bid. Martin Edwards, who has now failed to sell United on three occasions (to businessman Michael Knighton in the late 80s, and to the media company VCI a few years ago, as well as to Sky) may still consider other offers for the club.

Byers added that the takeover would have damaged the sport "by reinforcing the trend towards growing inequalities between the larger richer clubs and the smaller, poorer ones," but at the same time he also announced he was referring the possible takeover of Newcastle United by cable TV company NTL to the MMC. Sky's Mark Booth said: "This is a bad ruling for British football clubs who will have to compete in Europe against clubs who are backed by successful media companies." Few in football seem to agree this morning.



David Duval chips on to the second green in the second round at Augusta National yesterday

Allsport

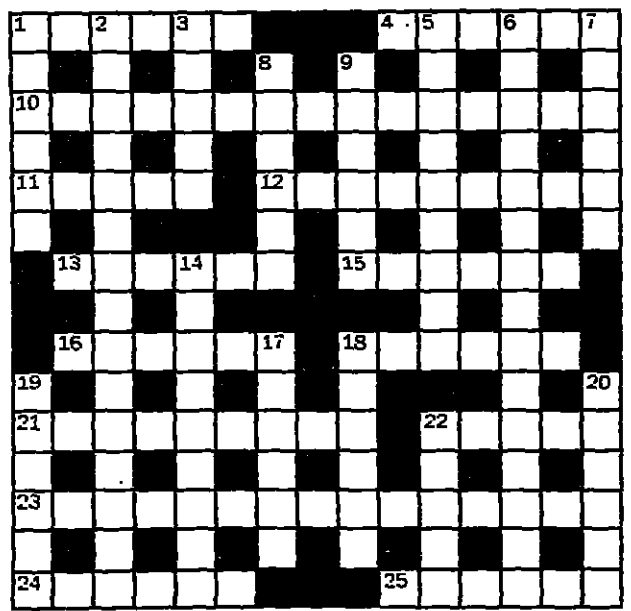
IN MONDAY'S 16-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

GRAND SLAM: Can Wales deny England their Five Nations glory? - Chris Hewett reports from Wembley
GRAND NATIONAL: Will Double Thriller do the punters proud? - Richard Edmondson on racing's biggest race
GRAND PRIX: Do McLaren have the horsepower to triumph in Brazil? - David Tremayne in São Paulo

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

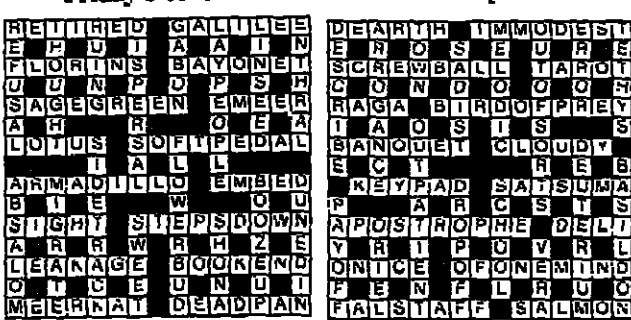
No.3893 Saturday 10 April

by Mass



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



ACROSS

- 1 Joint burden (6)
- 4 State probing American drink causes trouble (4,2)
- 10 Insulting a Parisian with abusive lip in description (13)
- 11 Flower of spring returning before end of February (5)
- 12 It's not fair! (9)
- 13 A tart offering that is a meal (6)
- 15 One in company? Not one to join (6)
- 16 Jagged riser near centre of Spain (6)
- 18 Spoke with artist on telephone (6)
- 21 Has plan - e.g. for organising right-wing parties (9)
- 22 Consort, royal family member (5)
- 23 A characteristic associated with obtuse angles? (15)
- 24 Bid conveying heart? (6)
- 25 Cereal ingredient, excess measure (6)

DOWN

- 1 End of play perplexes (6)
- 2 What scrub might yield? (15)
- 3 Sticky round East for a Brit (5)
- 5 Quashed, beaten, political group's interned (9)
- 6 Office announcement about leave (5,10)
- 7 Mexican drop? Eye pot, for a change (6)
- 8 Fish that's reportedly flat, perhaps? (6)
- 9 Heroin, say, is found on Southern coasters (6)
- 14 Corrupt blacklist is brought into open (9)
- 17 Silver dealer's run in (6)
- 18 Concerned with rings, adjusts gears again (6)
- 19 Begin to orate, embracing Right (6)
- 20 Is endlessly disposed to go around causing a stir (16)
- 22 Variety show (5)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive a hundred copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: R Barry, SE10; J Weald, Bicknacre; S Hogg, Burnley; A Crook, Quarrington Hill; A Harris, Forest Hill.

Price joins gang of four

NICK PRICE made it a quartet of first-round leaders in the 63rd US Masters after the Zimbabwean completed the 18th hole yesterday morning. Price and David Duval were forced to abandon their rounds with a hole to play on Thursday evening as the light faded but both returned to par the 18th.

Price, joint holder of the course record, scored a 69 to take him alongside Davis Love, Brandel Chamblee and Scott McCarron at the top of the leaderboard, while Duval, who missed a 12-foot birdie putt at the last, signed for a 71.

Duval, one in front of Tiger Woods, only hit eight greens in regulation. Having been three under at the turn, he then dropped three shots in a row from the 12th. "I played pretty well," said the world No 1, "but not as well as I can."

It was not until the 16th that Duval hit a green in the required number of shots on the back nine. The bogey at the short 12th came from a misjudgement off the tee, a badly hooked drive ended up in the creek on the left at the 13th while the wind switched on his approach to the 14th.

But someone in such rare form as Duval has been in winning for the last two weeks tends to generate his own luck and when he pushed his drive at the 17th, the ball not only rebounded back off one of the new trees planted on the right, but cannoned far up the fairway as well. A birdie resulted.

GOLF

BY ANDY FARRELL
in Augusta

Compare and contrast with Nick Faldo, whose form and fortune is at its lowest ebb. When the three-times Masters champion pulled his drive into the trees on the second, he was completely stymied and had to take an unplayable. The double-bogey seven set Faldo on course for an 80.

Only five players scored worse. One was the amateur, John Miller, three others were also former champions: 67-year-old Billy Casper, Arnold Palmer, 69 and making a record 45th consecutive appearance, and the 76-year-old Doug Ford. Joe Durant, a playing partner of Faldo, was fated the moment he won Wednesday's par-three contest.

The only high point of Faldo's round came when he hit a seven-iron to four inches at the 16th. At 27 over par for his last five rounds at Augusta, Faldo set out yesterday desperately trying to avoid the cut for the third successive year. "It's the same old story," Faldo said. "It's getting closer but it's not close enough." His cause was not helped by an outward 30-footer for birdie at the seventh but bogeys at the fourth, playing the hardest hole on the course, and the ninth.

Thursday was one of those fascinating days when Augusta, as a links does, changed hue with the changing weather conditions. Hot and humid for most of the day, the course was drying out fast and all the leaders bar Price, plus Colin Montgomerie and Jose Maria Olaz-

abal, who both scored 70s, had enjoyed early tee times.

In the afternoon, the defending champion, Mark O'Meara, had a 70 and Greg Norman, whose record here boasts three seconds and two thirds without a win, compiled a 71 as first the wind got up, then calmed as a thunderstorm came in, delaying play for 95 minutes. When the players got back out, it was very blustery and while Ian Woosnam had earlier hit a drive and a wedge from 102 yards at the last, Darren Clarke needed a three-wood and a three-iron to cover the 405 yards.

After straining his back on the range just before teeing off, Clarke hung on well in the end for a 75. "I have never had anything like this before," said Clarke. "I had shooting pains on every shot." But his real problem came on the greens, where, without considering he had putted badly, he took 40 putts.

That did not even include a penalty shot for the ball moving after he had addressed it. "This keeps happening to me," Clarke said. "It happened at least three times last year, including once here."

Lee Westwood also battled back well from another of his poor starts in a major. Five over after 12, Westwood birdied the 13th and 16th for another 75. The majority of his round was hard work as the 25-year-old struggled in the heat with a temperature, but he was more comfortable in the cool of the evening after the storm.

COMPLETE FIRST-ROUND AUGUSTA SCORES

US unless stated, par 72	73	77
B Chambliss, D Love, S McCarron, N Price (20m)	R Mediate, T Lehman, S Appleby (10m), P Stewart, T McNight, C Perry, B Watts	S Jones, M Kuchar, T Aaron, C Caddy
C Montgomerie (GB), JM Olazabal (Sp), J Leonard, A Magee, J Sturman, L Jonzen, M O'Meara	O Browne, G Hebertsiedt (Swi), P Floyd, B Funch, F Couples, T Watson, J Huston, B Crenshaw, P Mickelson, J Farnevik (Swe), H Kuchner, P Ronger	S Verplank, T Doodts (Nam), S Ballesteros (Sp), J Muggers, B Maylar, D Toms, G Day
S Price, B Estes, S Lyle (GB), E Els (SA), I Woodson (GB), M Ozaki (Japan), G Norman (Aus), J Mazz, D Duval	S Hoch, C Pavin, C Parry (Aus), T Heron, S Stricker, M Calcavecchia, D Clarke (GB), L Westwood (GB), B Tins, P-U Johansson (Swe)	H Sutton, G Player (SA), W Wood
C Snedler, J Daly, B Glas-son, T Woods, S Garcia (Sp), S Brington (Aus), C Franco (Par), V Singh (Ind), M A Jimenez (Sp), T Inman (SA), F Zoeller, F Luchter, B Jobe, S Kirk, J Furth	IP Hayes, P Slieland (Swe), L Mize, L Roberts, F Funk, B Langer (Ger), J Coca, B Andrus, T Bloom (Den), M Brooks	G Brewer, M Faldo (GB), J Miller, A Palmer, B Capper, J Durant, B Ford

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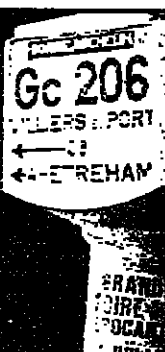
WELCOME TO A
NEW WORLD OF
OPPORTUNITY

INVESTING, PAGE 5



THE BEGINNER'S
GUIDE TO HOLIDAY
DRIVING IN EUROPE

MOTORING, PAGE 8



A GARDEN OF
EDEN OFF THE
FINCHLEY ROAD?

PROPERTY, PAGE 9



Goodbye PEP, hello ISA

After months of hype, the first ISAs are on sale at last. But should you invest? By Nic Cicutti

Everyone dreams of making history. For many of us, this might involve saving the world, scoring the winning goal in a cup final, or making 10 million-selling hit record.

This week, in his own slightly less dramatic way, Ash Rawal, a 38-year-old corporate consultant from Derby, also made history. At one minute after midnight on 6 April, Mr Rawal became the first person in the UK to buy an Individual Savings Account, Labour's new tax-free savings vehicle.

Whether his decision to stay up late turns out to be the epoch-making step Labour hopes crucially depends on whether millions of other savers follow his lead, and also invest in an ISA. And more important still will be the question of just who is investing: the acid test will be whether the ISA succeeds in attracting into it lower-paid people, who traditionally have been ignored by the savings market.

ISAs, which offer shelter from capital gains tax to investors, are the Treasury's answer to this perceived disenfranchisement. Unlike PEPs, which were primarily about investing in shares or bonds, ISAs will also allow savings to go into instant-access accounts or even insurance-linked products, both seen as more likely vehicles for working-class people's cash.

Despite the Treasury's best intentions, experts are mostly cynical about whether ISAs will improve savings habits among the working population. Research by the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (Auitf) suggested in March that consumers were unwilling to "commit" to the new savings product. Some 59 per cent of those surveyed were commitment phobics where ISAs were concerned, up from 52 per cent six months earlier. These worrying findings led Anne McMeekan, director of communications at Auitf, to say: "It is worrying that ISAs have still not succeeded in attracting wider public support. It seems the investment industry is already experiencing an uphill struggle in converting its existing customers."

Auitf's findings are matched by Marks & Spencer Financial Services, whose own survey shows that of the 67 per cent of adults who have heard of ISAs, more than half still know nothing about them.



The first ever ISA customer, Ash Rawal, gets his slice of the cake

Similar research emanates from Yorkshire bank, whose savings manager, Andrew Hindle, adds: "Given the Government's aim for the ISA - to end confusion and to make tax-free savings more accessible - our study shows much work to be done. Rather than end confusion, the level of understanding has not risen at all in the past year."

The fears of experts have been compounded by the seeming complexity of ISAs and the way in which some potential ISA providers, among them Save & Prosper, have been unable to launch products because their computer systems are not yet up to scratch. These worries led Sainsbury's Bank to say that it is not at present considering launching its own ISA.

So, less than one week into "ISA-land", is all the doom and gloom justified? The evidence is patchy, but

things don't appear to be as bad as they might be. On Thursday, Standard Life, a leading life insurer, announced that within 48 hours of the ISA's formal launch, it had already switched 18,000 of its existing PEP customers' monthly contributions into the new savings vehicle. In addition, it has fielded 3,000 enquiries from prospective customers on its ISA product range.

Alan Burton, managing director of mutual funds at Standard Life, says: "The initial response clearly doesn't compare with the level of activity seen during the last few weeks of the PEP season, but it is still very encouraging. There are clear signs that ISAs are of encouraging new savers."

National Savings, which also offered a competitive ISA savings account, reported 7,000 account openings, worth £10m, on Wednesday alone. Further evidence of the potential for ISAs also came from NatWest, whose survey shows that 43 per cent of people are considering investing in one.

This may sound like music to the Government's ears, but it is worth noting that the bulk of ISA investments for the foreseeable future are likely to be straight switches from existing cash-based savings accounts into ISA-linked accounts, where no tax need be paid on the interest.

Equity-linked ISAs are likely to remain a minority interest for some months to come, while providers struggle to get their systems up and running and to turn their PEP investors into ISA groupies. Under such circumstances, it is likely that choice, a key condition of any equity-linked investment, is likely to be more limited, in terms of available fund management groups, for some time to come.

Roddy Kohn, an independent financial adviser at Bristol-based Kohn Cougar, says: "My advice to clients is that, where they can, they should break from the cycle of last-minute investment seen at the end of every tax year. That means starting to make regular premium payments now."

"The problem is that not all funds-management groups have said exactly what they are launching. While there are plenty of good ISA-linked funds available now, it is probably wiser to wait for a few weeks while we find out what all the providers are likely to do."

Until then, the experts advise taking advantage of some excellent rates available from cash-linked ISAs. One important caveat is where an investor wants to maximise his or her holding in equities: setting up a cash-based "mini-ISA" will prevent them from placing all of their £7,000 entitlement for 1999/2000 into shares.

Either way, ISAs are here to stay - and the evidence is that Mr Rawal may have made a little history after all. The birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

Citigate

the birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

the birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

the birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

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the birth of the ISA, pages 5-7

BARGAINS OF THE WEEK

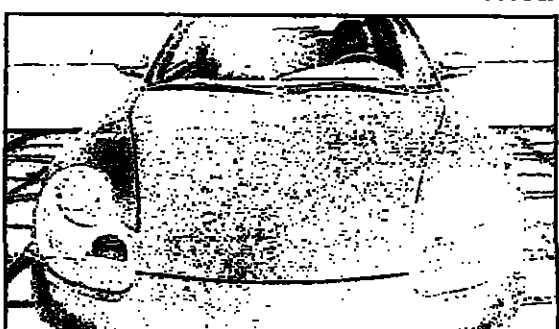


Property of the week

IT'S ONLY the scaffolding that's holding it up, so you would have to knock it down and start again, but planning permission has been given to turn the old Mission Hall in Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight, into a three-bedroom home.

Whoever takes it on will have to salvage and re-use some of the existing materials, so the resulting house will not look too different. Popular with yachting sorts, Bembridge has a reputation for being expensive, so there will be no shortage of offers for this old place at £39,950. Fully restored, it could be worth around £100,000. It's just a 10-minute walk to the sea and there are views to Culver Down. There is no garage, but street parking is not a problem, say the agents The Wright Estate Agency. Ring 01983 866 822 for details.

ROSALIND RUSSELL



Car of the week

IF YOU are a real car enthusiast, then a Porsche 911 is something that you really ought to drive, or at the very least own once in your motoring life. The design is timeless, although the handling borders on the suicidal in the hands of a novice.

Putting the engine in the rear might be questionable, but there is no escaping the stunning performance, or classic design. The trouble is that Porsche 911s can be frighteningly expensive. As a result, UK dealers are importing more left-hand-drive Porsches than ever.

Adrian Crawford (01752 840307) realises what fine value they are and has a 1994 Carrera in green which has covered 110,000 miles with a full service history. The price, at just £12,495, means a saving of some £4,000 on a right-hand-drive example.

JAMES RUPPERT



Deal of the week

OK, SO everyone's offering free Internet access nowadays. But there is only one access provider which does so while providing financial information at the same time. The service provider, set up earlier this year, is Investors Financial Network, or InFinNet.

Even more distinctive is the way InFinNet uses other computer tools, such as CD-ROMs, to deliver even more information. The logic behind this move is that most computer users do not have equipment powerful enough to handle quality videos from the Internet.

InFinNet's latest offering is a CD of video-based interviews with London stockbrokers on investment-related topics. To sign up, contact www.infinet.co.uk, or you can obtain the CD free with a copy of April's What Investment magazine and sign up from that.

NIC CICUTTI

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NAME: PAUL AND NINA WALDMANN AGE: 44 OCCUPATION: SELF-EMPLOYED CABINET MAKER AND FREELANCE CATERER

NIC
CICUTTIThe stampede to
invest in PEPs puts us
at a disadvantage to
the providers

AT LAST, the frenzy is over. Sales of PEPs finally stopped at midnight on Monday – but not before thousands of people spent a large slice of their bank holiday queuing outside PEP providers' offices, or even drove hundreds of miles to deliver their applications by hand.

This last-minute investment ritual is complete madness. Of course, there will be people who cannot invest until they know how much money they have available in that tax year. But for the vast majority investing in this way is simply a reflection of the fact that they failed to do anything about their savings in the 12 months prior to the abolition of PEPs.

The danger of this approach is two-fold. The most obvious is that the stampede to invest in this way puts us at a disadvantage to PEP providers themselves.

Sure, some of them will tempt savers by offering discounts on their products that might not be available at other times of the year. Generally, however, it is possible to obtain discounts throughout a tax year.

At the same time, it becomes virtually impossible to do one's homework on a particular fund, checking out its performance, its volatility, the investment approach of one fund manager relative to another. Remember, if you are tucking away several thousands of pounds for several years, these are just a handful of the questions that need to be asked.

Even more dangerous is the fact that this wall of money flooding into equities at the same time has the effect of pushing share prices up beyond what many experts consider to be their normal value. In other words, investors end up paying inflated prices for their PEPs, which is precisely the opposite of what any canny saver ought to be doing.

We will only discover how inflated these prices were in a few weeks' time. Hopefully, not too much, or else – even bearing in mind that equity investment is something you do for the long haul – nursing an immediate loss

on one's fund will be the result for many savers.

One further thought strikes me. The last-minute investment push also had the effect of pushing many savers, whose tax position meant that PEPs gave them virtually no gain whatsoever, into buying one. Of course, newspapers (possibly including this one) may have contributed to the sense of panic – although most responsible journalists did point out that in many cases there was little need for this last-minute frenzy.

But a large part of the blame must lie with PEP providers themselves. They knew that PEPs would be replicated by ISAs which are virtually identical in terms of their tax-effectiveness. Simply telling investors: "Don't worry if you miss the PEP bus, there'll be an ISA one along in a minute" wouldn't have generated a fraction of the sales they achieved in the countdown to 5 April.

In recent months, providers have complained bitterly about CATmarks, the Treasury's attempt to ensure fairly-priced financial products. Fund managers say benchmarks expose unwary investors to greater risk, because they assume any CATmarked product carries a Government seal of approval.

I must remember that I claim the next time I read interviews with those queuing on Easter Monday, who admitted they didn't have a clue about PEPs, but felt they simply had to invest because, well, they didn't want to miss the boat, did they?

Paul and Nina first moved to their present home in Cambridge 21 years ago. In 1984 they were able to buy it under a right-to-buy scheme. They originally paid £24,000 for the house, but after making substantial improvements, it is now worth about £146,000.

They have increased their borrowing over the years and they currently have an outstanding mortgage of £98,000. They have a Scottish Widows endowment policy for £73,500 which is due to mature in 2022. Apart from this Paul and Nina have very little savings or investments. They have two children: Emma is 21 and Ben is 12. They generally have around £200 in surplus income every month. Nina works part-time, and most of their income comes from Paul's cabinet-making business.

The adviser: Thomas McPhail is pensions development manager for independent financial advisers Torquil Clark plc, St Marks, Chapel Ash, Wolverhampton, WV3 0TZ. (01902 578775).

The advice: The good news is that there is still time to take action, but only just. There are several issues that need to be addressed – the biggest is the mortgage which was originally taken out in 1984 with a term of 25 years.

Unfortunately Paul and Nina had to cash in their endowment policy and only restarted saving with their Scottish Widows policy 2 years ago. Endowment policies tend to be good value only if held to maturity, and most of the small print is, not surprisingly, in the insurance company's favour. In order to ensure that they have the necessary capital to repay the mortgage when it is due, they will have to either increase their savings substantially or defer the repayment of their mortgage.

The current endowment policy has a monthly contribution of £143. If they want to repay the mortgage on its original maturity date of 2009 they will need to increase their monthly savings to around £450 per month. After a very brief discussion, this option was rejected.

The alternative is to ask their lender, Abbey National, if it would be possible to extend the term of their mortgage to coincide with the ma-



Wood has been good to Paul – now it's time for him to be good to himself

Hulton Getty

turity date of their endowment policy. This would avoid an increase in costs now, but they would have to pay interest on the outstanding mortgage for an extra 13 years.

Given the nature of their occupations, and their fluctuating incomes, Paul and Nina should look to build up

a cash reserve to cover short-term financial emergencies. Ideally they should have enough cash to cover expenditure requirements for at least three months. They can set up a direct debit from their current account to feed into a deposit account, a cash ISA would be suitable for this

purpose and has interest credited without any tax being deducted.

Apart from their endowment policy Paul and Nina have very little in the way of insurance to cover illness, injury or death, so the loss of Paul's income would have serious consequences, particularly while Ben is

still financially dependent on them. Insuring against these possibilities to the maximum would be prohibitively expensive, but modest levels of cover can make a big difference. A CGU Family Income Benefit policy would, for a cost of under £17 per month, provide an income of £200 a week in the event of death during the next eight years. Paul can use a FII policy to insure against the possibility of being temporarily unable to work through illness – for him, cover of £700 per month would cost around £36 per month.

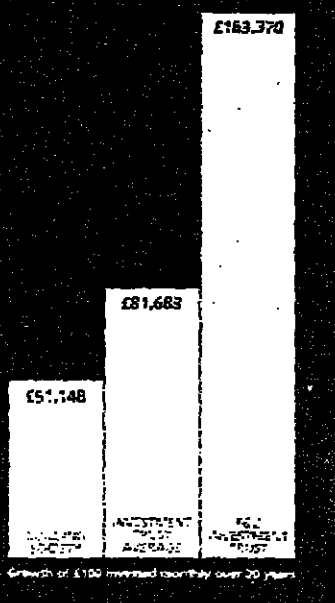
A critical-illness policy which pays out on diagnosis of severe medical conditions such as heart disease, cancer or a stroke would cost Paul and Nina around £65 per month for cover of £69,000, which would be enough to pay off the mortgage.

Paul and Nina's pension planning has been limited to date. Paul paid contributions to a Hill Samuel self-employed personal pension for a couple of years, but is not currently putting in any money. Paul and Nina have been self-employed for most of their working lives, and as such will only be entitled to the basic state pension for a married couple, just £106.70 per week in this tax year.

Their only other source of income in retirement would be to sell their house to release the equity. Any additional action they can take now will reduce pressures in later years, so Paul should look at restarting his pension contributions immediately. He has already paid the starting costs on his existing pension so it is better to use that one than to start another.

A contribution of £50 per month gross (£38.50 net) could produce a pension of around £4,000 per annum at Paul's 65th birthday. This is a good start and can be increased as time goes by. Where possible, increases to existing pensions should be made via a discount broker to reduce costs. If possible in the future, they should also try to make some pension contributions in Nina's name, since she will be able to draw a tax-free income in retirement up to the level of the personal allowance.

One further option would be for Paul to employ Nina, either now or at some point in the future, to help with his business. By paying her a salary of a few thousand pounds per year they may be able to reduce the household tax liability, and help with pension planning.

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A risky business

Warrants can boost your pain or your gain. By Rachel Fixsen

If you make a killing on a particular share, you will have no regrets, except you might be sorry you did not buy more of them. But there are ways of magnifying potential share gains without increasing your initial outlay. One of these is to invest in warrants.

What are warrants? Well, they are a type of geared investment. Gearing describes the process of increasing your exposure to a certain investment for the same outlay.

Companies become highly geared if they use a large proportion of borrowed money in addition to share capital to fund their operations. Gearing up is a very risky strategy - just as you can magnify your gains, so losses are exaggerated too.

Warrants are securities which give you the right to buy a certain share at a certain price (the exercise or subscription price) before a fixed time in the future.

They can be traded and usually cost only a fraction of the price of the share itself. Often, the exercise price is not far off the share's current price. If this is the case, warrant holders benefit from any rise in that share's price just as they would have done by owning the share, but for a fraction of the cost.

On the market, the price of a particular warrant fluctuates, often exaggerating the underlying share's movements. You can either make money by selling the warrants after a big rise, or by waiting until the warrants can be exercised and then buying the shares that they represent. You then make an instant profit by selling that share at the - hopefully - higher market price.

There is a downside: these are very risky investments indeed. If the share price falls below the strike price, or never even reaches it, then your warrant is worthless. You could lose all the capital you invested.

In effect, when you buy warrants you are betting on future price movements, so you should only invest money you can afford to lose. But there are huge potential gains to be made if you are both daring and well-informed.

One person who has done well is Kean Seager, the chairman at Whitechurch Securities. He says: "I don't simply look for the most risky investment. I start by making normal decisions first. This means looking for the right sector and where prospects look promising."

For example in February 1997, Mr Seager felt the UK equity market was likely to do well. If UK equities were likely to do well, he felt capital shares in split capital investment trusts would do better. Taking the logic of his argument further, he opted for warrants in the capital shares themselves - gearing up on a geared investment.

Mr Seager bought 25,000 warrants in Fleming Income & Growth at 6p each. As of mid-century this year, they were worth 83.5 pence, up 14 times on their original price in under two years. Companies issue warrants as a way of raising finance. But nowadays only smaller companies issue them, which means many warrants



Kean Seager: 'I start by making normal decisions.'

Moneywise

on single company shares are particularly risky. British Aerospace is the only blue chip company which has warrants in issue at the moment.

But many investment trusts also issue warrants. "These are quite good for people to cut their teeth on because the risk is slightly lower," says Andrew McHattie, editor of specialist newsletter *Warrants Alert*. About 130 of the 190 warrants listed on the London Stock Exchange are investment trust warrants, he adds.

You buy warrants through a stockbroker or financial adviser. The cost is the same as dealing in shares: when you come to exercise the warrant there is no fee to pay. But novices to warrants should expect a warning from stockbrokers. "Most brokers won't let you near warrants until you've signed a risk warning notice," says Matthew Orr of stockbrokers Killik & Co.

How do you choose a warrant? Tim Cockerill, of independent advisers Whitechurch Securities in Bristol, advises looking for warrants with a long life. "Anyone who's dabbling in warrants, especially for the first time, should get one with a long life - it's like a safety net," he says.

Perpetual Income & Growth warrants have 7.8 years left to run. "So if everything goes disastrously wrong in the next two years, you still have time for it to recover," Mr Cockerill says. The warrants cost 37p and the subscription price is £1. Shares in the trust are currently trading at £1.27.

For a more exciting time, Mr Cockerill recommends Foreign & Colonial Latin American warrants which have 6.3 years

left to run. The warrants cost 42p and have a subscription price of 63p. With the shares trading at 89p, this means the warrants are now at a premium of 15p - wider than that of the Perpetual warrants.

Other investment trust warrants worth watching are Henderson Technology Trust warrants and TR European Growth Trust warrants, says Andrew McHattie. The Henderson warrants provide exposure to the rapidly expanding technology sector while holders of the TR warrants stand to gain from a recovery in the trust's portfolio.

Should you wait to exercise your warrants, or sell them? If you have managed to double your money in a short time, then this could be a good time to sell them, says Mr Cockerill. "You have to ask yourself what you are going into warrants for," he says. "If it is for a short-term gain, then if you see it, take it." But if you aim for longer term gains, it may be worth waiting to actually exercise the warrant.

Whatever happens, don't forget to exercise them. Warrants have an expiry date, and if this passes before you have exercised them, they automatically become worthless.

This situation has sparked rows between client and broker. "Make it clear who has responsibility for monitoring the warrant," says Mr Orr.

Warrants are widely seen as a dying market in the UK. "A lot of them tended to be issued on Far East trusts, and they fell out of bed," says Gideon Foster of brokers Wise Speke. Although few major companies now issue warrants, there

is a huge market in Europe for covered warrants, which are linked to more established shares but are issued by third parties.

However, covered warrants cannot be traded on the London Stock Exchange, and the dealing costs are usually too high for smaller investors.

In some senses, warrants can be a way of making your money work twice, says Matthew Orr. Because warrants cost a fraction of a share price, the remaining cash can accrue interest in a bank or building society account. But holders of warrants do not get the dividends shareholders do. "If that share is a big dividend payer, then you've got to factor that in," Mr Orr says.

And although you do risk losing all your money when you buy warrants, there is a more positive way of looking at it. This is the only money you stand to lose. "If you'd bought the security, you could, in theory, watch the thing go bust," says Mr Orr.

Warrants Alert: 0117 9258882; Whitechurch Securities: 0117 9442266; Killik & Co: 0171-761 4400

The Independent is offering a free 'Guide to High Risk/High Reward Investment', which outlines the most common ways in which savers can obtain higher than average returns on their funds, including warrants, by taking a more aggressive approach with their money. Your free copy of the guide, which is sponsored by Whitechurch Securities, is available by calling 0845 2711003

SOME FANCIFUL souls have likened the Internet to a gold rush in the Wild West. A cattle stampede might be a more accurate analogy. But while we may argue about descriptions, there is no disagreement about the fact that financial regulation is lagging behind technological development.

The Treasury's consultation document issued last month on financial promotion sets out, in part, to redress the balance. The current regime asserts jurisdiction over every website accessible in the UK containing advertisements relating to investments or investment services.

However, before the Financial Services Authority (FSA) sets out to take on the world it has set itself a series of guidance factors on whether to take enforcement action.

Among these self-imposed hurdles are whether the website is located in the UK; the extent to which the



INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMLÔT

underlying service is available to UK investors and, perhaps most importantly, the extent to which the advert is directed at persons in the UK.

The suggestion is that there should be "an exemption from the financial promotion regime for promotions issued from overseas, which, although available in the UK, are not 'directed at' the UK". Quite how you go about defining the bottom line is this and is admitted as such:

"UK investors who visit overseas Web sites which promote stocks on various international securities markets might not be protected under UK law."

One other point. We are constantly told to check the small print. Be warned: in future the small print may not actually appear on Web advertisements.

The consultation document says on this subject: "All promotional material must contain all the relevant information or be clearly connected to such information." This seems an open invitation to put all the worrisome warnings on another page that people may not bother to view.

Now let us move on. Global Investor is running a competition inviting you to predict the share price of Amazon.com on 30 April. First prize is a balloon flight with a champagne breakfast, plus \$1,000 worth of investment tools.

You have until midnight on 23 April to enter. Here

are a few pointers: last year Amazon lost \$124 million, up from \$31 million in 1997; its share price has climbed from \$13 a year ago to a peak of \$199 in January 1999 before slipping back.

The first 100 runners-up will receive a copy of *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, by Charles Mackay, and a bright red panic button for their computer keyboard.

The book, written in 1841, remains the definitive work on money manias. The button has no real function, but, for investors who fail to anticipate the inevitable correction in Internet stock prices, it will be as effective as any other action!

HM Treasury: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk
Global Investor: www.global-investor.com/bookshop/com/p/hot-air.htm

Robin can be reached at RobinAmlot@aol.com

Source: 5 year performance figures. Standard & Poor's Global Growth Offer to effect net income investment to 1st March 1999. * 1st means top quartile performance over five years in the individual standard R. Poor's Mutual sector in the case of Global Growth since launch on 1.10.96. ISAs were introduced from 6th April 1999 for an initial ten year period. A 10% tax credit on all dividend distributions may be reclaimed up to 6th April 2004. The value of current tax relief depends on individual circumstances. If you have any doubts about your tax position, you should seek professional advice. If you have any doubts whether this product is suitable for you and you wish to obtain personal advice please contact an independent financial adviser. You must read the Terms and Conditions before investing. The value of investments and the income from them may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount originally invested. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Emerging markets are volatile and can suffer from liquidity problems. Changes in rates of exchange between currencies may also cause the value of investments to increase or decrease. Telephone calls may be recorded, stored and approved by Garmore Investment Limited. Garmore's authorised unit trusts are managed by Garmore Fund Managers Limited. Both companies are regulated by FSA and the Personal Investment Authority and are members of the National Association of Garmore Marketing Group (Garmore House, 10-11 Monument Street, London EC3R 8AL).

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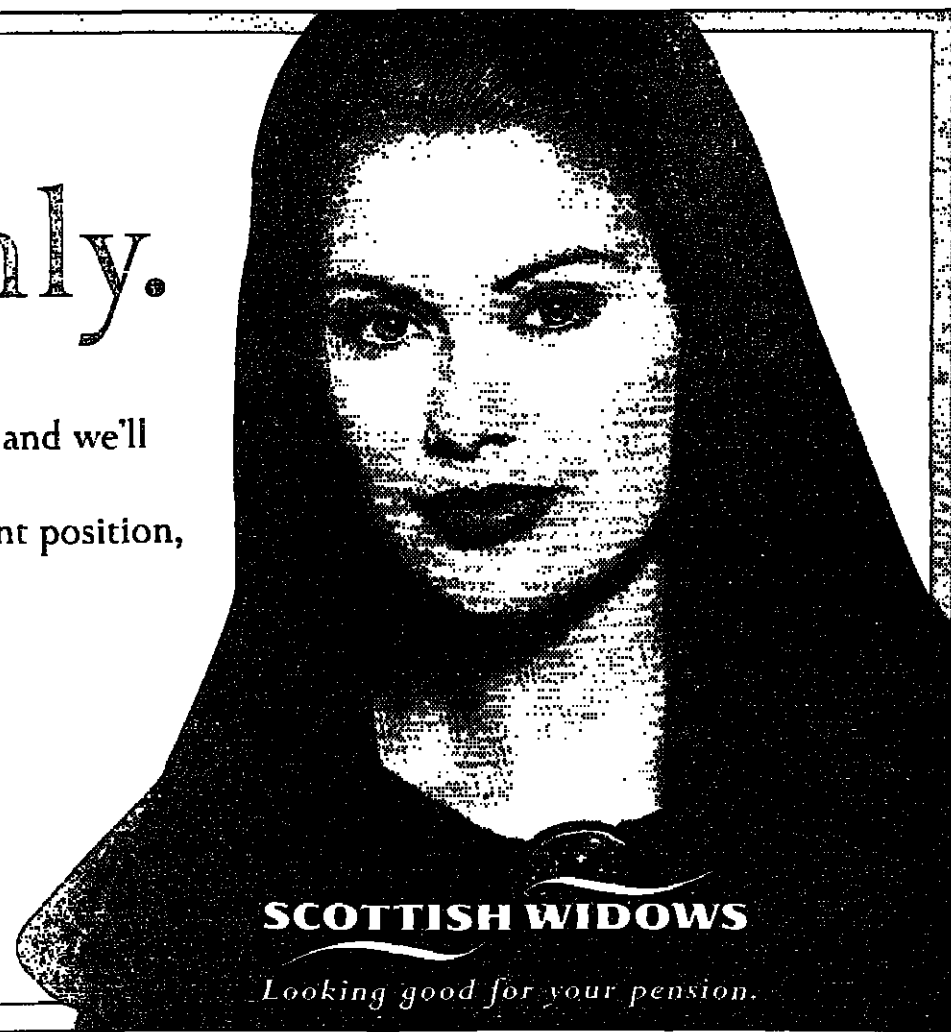
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NORWICH AND Peterborough Building Society is launching a cash ISA for existing and new customers, paying 6.75 per

cent variable rate of interest (guaranteed to be equal to UK base rates until April 2001). Minimum investment for existing customers is £1,000 or £3,000 for new ones. Also available is a Tessa-only ISA, for maturing Tessa. Again, the rate paid is 6.75 per cent, with a minimum investment of £100 for existing clients and £1,000 for new ones (01733 362636).

NATIONWIDE is offering a cash ISA, the Members' ISA Bond, which pays 4.5 per cent on balances of £1 or more for existing members of the society. They guarantee to pay at least 1 per cent above base rates until 5 April 2001. Details from any Nationwide branch.

The need for assurance

Few companies are offering life assurance as part of an ISA. Tony Lyons finds out why

One of the great surprises with Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) is to find that only a small number of managers of the new tax-efficient savings plans are prepared to offer life assurance. In fact, some of the biggest life offices have already stated that they will not be offering any life policies even with their Maxi-ISAs.

Under the ISA rules, up to £1,000 a year per person can be invested in life assurance, with neither income nor capital gains tax payable on the underlying fund or the policy proceeds. In addition, a 10 per cent tax credit is claimed by the fund on the dividends of UK shares held in respect of ISA policies and paid before the end of the tax year in 2004.

Colin Liddle of Standard Life, for example, claims: "Customer research carried out by us showed conclusively that there was little demand for life assurance. In fact, it showed that while there was a lot of confusion about ISAs in general, people saw them as investment and savings products, not for protection." Other big life offices and investment houses (including Scottish Widows, CGU, Equitable Life, Legal & General, and Royal & Sun Alliance) have followed this line and have already announced that their ISAs will not offer any life assurance element.

So far, only a handful will be offering this element. They are likely to be joined by some of the friendly societies when they announce their plans. Tumbidge Wells Equitable will be offering a with-profits bond investment while Liverpool & Victoria is expected to announce its ISA range in June and its insurance element is likely to be an endowment policy with premi-

ums starting at £30 a month, just above the maximum limit for friendly society tax-exempt savings plans.

"We wanted to offer our investors the full ISA range," says Gug Kyriacou of Abbey National. "We know that many of them do not want to invest in equities, preferring the idea of with-profits policies that smooth out the peaks and troughs of the market. We've had over 20,000 requests for the video we offer our investors that explains our ISAs, so we know that there is plenty of demand out there."

At present, most of the providers offering life assurance ISAs are taking a similar path to Abbey National and offering a variant of the with-profits bond. "It is very difficult to provide a version of the conventional with-profits endowment policy," says David Mott of the Co-operative Insurance Society. "The with-profits bond, however, is designed to be a halfway house between a building society account and equities. The initial bonus rate will be 4 per cent, better than most deposit accounts, and includes a special 0.5 per cent first-anniversary bonus on cash contributions paid before 6 April 2000. We believe this bond is suitable for those savers who like the relatively low risk of with-profits plans."

Norwich Union, however, found from its research that people did want a type of with-profits endowment that could be included in an ISA. "We found that many savers were fed up with the returns they were receiving from notice and deposit accounts but were unhappy about investing directly in equities," says the company's Martin Chapman. "Insurance ISAs bridge this gap for those averse to risk."

More to the point, Norwich Union perceives that many potential investors could use its insurance ISA to pay their mortgages. "Even today,

some 80 per cent of borrowers use some sort of savings plan to repay the capital on their mortgages," adds Mr Chapman. "PEP mortgages never really took off as they were seen as highly volatile and risky. We have developed our life assurance ISA as a mortgage repayment vehicle for those who take out interest-only home loans. We estimate that the £23-a-month maximum premium per individual is enough to pay off a £50,000 mortgage over 25 years - £100,000 for a couple."

The Government may have stated that ISAs are only guaranteed to be around for 10 years, but as Mr Chapman points out, there was never any guarantee about how long PEPs would be around and this did not stop providers offering PEP mortgage repayment plans.

"The insurance ISA is designed for long-term savers, not those who want quick access to their money," says Peter Beuken of Pearl Assurance. He is surprised that so many providers have opted not to include life assurance in their ISAs. "It's hard to work out what's behind spin. I suspect the real truth is that many companies have IT problems. It took a long time for the Government to announce its ISA details, too long for them to put the right systems in place for them to have an insurance ISA at the start."

Whether through endowment or bond, all the providers will be offering utilised with-profits. This means that it will be easier for the investor to keep an eye on the value of their insurance ISA. But none of them will have CAT marks, because the providers found that they could not offer a minimum premium of £25 a month or £250 a year with a maximum charge of 3 per cent, nor can they offer surrender values at least equal to a full return of premiums after three years.



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Norwich Union (tel: 0800 0562450)	W profit endowment instal, 0.875% annual	£25 a month	£2 a month policy cost, 5%
Pearl (tel: 01733 470470)	W profit endowment	£30 a month	3.3% annual
Scottish Amicable (0141 248 2323)	W profit bond account of annual charge	£50 a month	3% initial, 1.25% annual
Scottish Friendly (tel: 0141 275 5000)	W profit bond	£30 a month or £500	4% initial, 1% annual

The CAT fight brewing in the world of ISAs

The Government's efforts to simplify investment could lead to even more confusion. By Katharine Lewis

AT FIRST glance, the new Government initiative called CAT standards sounds like a promotion against cruelty to animals sponsored by the RSPCA.

A CATmark is actually a label that financial services companies can use to show their Individual Savings Account (ISA) complies with certain standards. The Government's idea is to give guidance to new or unsophisticated investors. But many financial experts fear that the CATmarked ISA product will cause a lot of confusion. At its worst, CATmarks could lead to another scandal of misguided buying like the personal pensions disaster the industry is sorting out at the moment, or so it is alleged.

CAT stands for charges, access and terms. Each ISA product with a CATmark must meet the standards for each of these terms,

which vary depending on whether the ISA invests in cash, stocks and shares or insurance.

In general the label shows that the charges are particularly low and that investors can access their money at any time and without penalty. The pricing of the fund's units must be simple to understand and the minimum investment must be low.

The CAT standards for an ISA investing in stocks and shares, for example, require the ISA to have no initial charge and a total annual charge of no more than 1 per cent. The minimum lump-sum investment must be no more than £500 and the minimum regular savings investment must be set no higher than £50 a month. The units of the fund must be quoted at a single price, rather than the confusing bid/offer spread used by unit trusts in PEPs in the past.

All this seems very worthwhile.

The CAT standard is aimed at sparking greater interest in the stockmarket and collective investments, but according to Autif (the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds) this is exactly the problem.

Philip Warland, director general of Autif says: "CAT standards are like electricity. Potentially, they are very good and useful, but if you handle them wrong you will get burnt. Because of this, we are strongly against them."

Mr Warland believes that while CATmarked ISAs offer security against crippling charges, they can offer no guarantee of performance. But the public may not understand this distinction. "And evidence shows there is not a lot of correlation between cost and performance in unit trusts," he adds.

Mr Warland fears that CATmarked ISAs could lead to a misguidance scandal because most of these products will be sold directly to the public and not through independent financial advisers. Investors will therefore not be getting advice about performance. This is because the low CAT charges cannot supply enough income to pay advisers for giving advice to their customers.

Many top PEP and ISA providers agree with Autif's stance on ISAs and have decided not to launch CATmarked products. "We think most investors need advice, so we are not going to launch a CAT product. Moreover, I think CAT standards will confuse investors. ISAs are complicated enough already," says Roger Cornick, marketing director at Perpetual, a leading fund management firm.

But Virgin disagrees. It has launched a CAT-standard ISA based on its FTSE All-Share tracker. "We want all our ISAs to be CATmarked. We are 100 per cent committed to CAT standards," says Gordon Maw, marketing manager at Virgin.

Mr Maw believes that knowing that charges will not be excessive will take out one of the risk elements, leaving investors free to decide about performance.

Mr Warland concedes that CAT standards are useful for cash funds because they guarantee an interest rate that is not less than two percentage points below the base rate. "But," he says, "there is no way you can create a CAT standard for stocks and shares ISAs that takes performance into account because, as all investment companies say, 'the past is no guide to the future.'"

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Is your portfolio in the right team?

You may not be able to add to your PEPs, but now the decision is whether to transfer or consolidate. By Rachel Fixsen

TOO LATE – your last chance to put money into a Personal Equity Plan has gone. But with more than £80bn already tucked away in PEPs, the battle between financial services providers to get their hands on your investment has only just begun.

It has always been possible to transfer your PEP from one investment fund to another and even from one provider to another, although there are certain restrictions.

For instance, moving money between funds run by a single PEP manager is quite easy, but if you are transferring to another manager, you have to move one whole tax year's general PEP at a time, even though this might be split between different investments.

And some providers "bundle" plans taken out in different tax years, making them impossible to separate. In these cases, you have to move all or nothing.

Many investors have shifted PEPs from one manager to another in the past, but now that PEP funds cannot be added to, transfer activity could hot up.

"Quite a lot of PEP investors have five or six years' of PEPs under their belt, and they are now starting to review them – in the early years, they weren't too concerned," says Philip Warland, director general of the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds.

PEP providers have been pulling out all the stops in the last few

months to capture investment capital in the last PEP year. In that competition, the most that was at stake was £8,000 per person, but in the battle for PEP transfers the sums are much larger, running into tens of thousands of pounds for each individual.

"There will be continued rumblings in the market," says Mr Warland.

Although PEPs are now closed to new money, they have been replaced by a very similar investment vehicle – the Individual Savings Account. Overall annual investment limits are lower than for PEPs, but ISAs do allow a much broader spread of investment.

However, financial services providers are still unsure how popular ISAs will be, and until they really take off the fight over existing PEP funds will go on.

There are many reasons why a PEP holder might want to transfer. You could just be dissatisfied with your PEP provider. Or you might have been investing for capital growth at the beginning, but now need an income stream, particularly if you are retiring. There may be no satisfactory income fund available from your current PEP manager.

If you have a substantial portfolio of PEPs where a large proportion is with one fund manager, you might want to spread your risk by shifting some funds to a different manager. Or if your PEPs are scattered



Alan Shearer is not the only investment with a fantastic transfer value

between different providers you might try to cut the paperwork by consolidating them under one provider – though not into the same fund.

Janice Thomson, of discount broker Chelsea Financial Services, warns against transferring PEP funds unless there is a very good reason for it. Valid reasons might be because your requirements have changed, because you want to

change the geographical or sectoral balance of your portfolio or because your fund is consistently outperformed by other similar funds, she says.

Stay put if you can, because

transferring can be very expensive. If you are just switching to chase better investment performance, the move can prove counterproductive. PEP transfers are usually treated as new business and the initial fee can be as much as 5 per cent. There may also be a transfer charge and commission.

Transfers into Capel-Cure Myers' unit trust PER for example, is very expensive. There is a 5 per cent initial charge and this added to the transfer charge and commission cuts 6.9 per cent off the value of the investment, according to Money Management, a specialist publication.

However, some PEP managers encourage transfers by waiving the initial charge. Direct PEP providers such as Direct Line, Equitable and Virgin Direct make no initial charge or commission on money transferred into their PEPs, neither does Legal & General.

If you want someone to make the decisions for you on your PEP investments, you could opt for a fund of funds PEP. Henderson Investors offers its Transfer PEP where you can choose between an income or growth portfolio or a mixture of the two. The PEP is linked to Henderson's fund of funds unit trusts.

"Clients will continue to receive a spread of investment styles and investment houses," says Sarah Speake of Henderson Investors. Each fund of funds typically invests

in between 12 and 20 different funds. Though funds of funds always involve a double layer of charges, Ms Speake says Henderson is able to negotiate discounts.

There is no initial charge for PEP transfers.

If you do want to make a change, you should first consider whether your existing PEP manager has another fund which would be better. This is the quickest and cheapest way to change your portfolio, says Janice Thomson. "This way you are not out of the market for a long period when you might lose out to market fluctuations," she says.

Transfers often take an unaccountably long time, she warns. If you just want to simplify your PEPs but keep the actual investments the same, an umbrella PEP provider such as Skandia or Eurolife can make sense. Skandia's MultiPEP offers access to 98 funds run by different investment managers including Fidelity, Perpetual and M&G.

"You have to consider whether it's a service worth paying for," says Janice Thomson. It can cost an extra 0.5 per cent a year. These services can help those investing for income who find it hard to keep track of the various cheques coming in.

But they become expensive if you or your adviser show no more interest in researching new investment opportunities and actively switching funds in your portfolio during each tax year.

Who can you trust with your unit trust transfers?

Making good judgements about your potential investments is never easy. Let our panellists offer you some guidance. By Iain Morse

HOW DO you choose one unit trust against another, and when should you switch holdings? The Independent asked three independent financial advisers to recommend funds to sell and buy in three of the most popular unit trust sectors: UK Growth, UK Equity Income and UK Smaller Companies.

We don't look often or critically enough at our existing investments, a little caution is needed if you decide to sell and then buy. This is not a cost-free exercise. If you are trying to add how much cash you will raise from encashing a unit trust, remember to base your calculation on the "offer" price, or the amount per unit you will be paid by the trust manager when redeeming your units. If you are buying into a fund you will pay the "bid" price, which will be higher than the offer price. This bid/offer spread is typically around 5 per cent. Treat this spread as the true cost of your investment.

Jason Hollands, BEST Investment, London
The real art of sound investment is to make the right judgement about future performance. There are plenty of good examples of former "star" funds that waned or became "dogs" following changes of personnel. Follow the manager, not the fund name. Lazard's UK Equity Income fund is an example of this and their one-time

star performer. This has drifted since fund manager Tim Russell was poached by HSBC.

It is not yet a dog, but performance has suffered. Holders of the fund should consider a transfer to Colin Moreton's BWD UK Equity Income fund, a trust which has managed to beat the All Share Index in each one of the last five years. In the UK Growth sector, we recommend holders of M&G's British Opportunities consider a switch, as this sector has underperformed in the last five years. I would consider a move to Jeremy Lang's River & Mercantile First Growth Fund, which has beaten the All Share Index annually for the last five years.

Finally, the smaller companies sector has shown some of the greatest disparities in performance over the last five years; partly owing to the way fund results can be improved by stock selection. Equitable Smaller Companies has underperformed in this sector; try a change to Frank Manduca's Gartmore UK Smaller Companies.

Don Clark, Torquill Clark, Wolverhampton
Among UK Equity Income funds I would come out of Lincoln's Income fund, which has failed to produce even average returns; it has been consistently third and often fourth quartile in its sector. Instead

buy Jupiter's Income Trust, managed by William Littlewood, producing top quartile returns over one, three and five years. This fund is worth over £1bn with strong core holdings, but also many small bets.

Among UK Growth funds, sell Sovereign's UK Growth. It has shown superb consistency, but over five years it has been fourth quartile. Investors have seen it grow by 26 per cent over five years, against a sector average of 56 per cent.

Buy Save & Prosper's Premier Equity Growth instead. The fund style is one of risk control. Performance has been consistently strong, better than the FTSE All Share over the last six years. A good bal-

ance of performance and risk management. UK Smaller Companies are always a difficult sector to judge. I would sell Martin Currie UK Smaller Companies, and buy Gartmore's UK Smaller Companies instead.

Anthony Yagdaroff, Allen Direct, London
In the UK Equity Income sector I would transfer out of Baillie Gifford's Income fund which has done poorly, returning just 35.7 per cent against sector average returns over three years of 60.6 per cent. Consider Fidelity's Income Plus fund, run by Tim McCarron. This has returned 84.2 per cent over the same period, managed on a stock-picking basis,

with emphasis on dividend growth and reduced volatility.

The UK Equity Growth sector has shown average returns of 60.6 per cent over the last three years, with market conditions not unfavourable to fund managers. Why, then, has Murray's Blue Chip fund managed a return of only 46.2 per cent? Transfer out to Britannia's Balanced Growth fund, which has grown 70.8 per cent over the same period.

I would sell Lloyds Bank Smaller Companies & Recovery fund; this has returned just 14.7 per cent over 3 years against a sector return of 45 per cent. Much the same is true of M&G's Smaller Companies fund, growing by just 6.8 per cent.

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The green movement

These days buyers want more outside space – and developers are taking note. By Mary Wilson



The interior of one of the Westfield apartments

People buying new homes are not only interested in the size of the property they are buying, they are also looking at what outside space is available. And with summer soon upon us, any properties – whether houses or apartments – which have access to decent-sized communal gardens are selling like hot cakes.

Ian and Gina Dwyer have bought a five-bedroom wing of Henley Park, near Guildford, Surrey, which has 27 acres of private grounds. Hencan Country Homes has converted a derelict Jacobean manor house into four large homes and is building six new detached houses, three mews houses and a pair of attached cottages in the grounds.

"We came from a detached house in Hampshire and we wanted something with character but without the problems of an old house," Mrs Dwyer says.

"We have two children, aged eight and 10 and they need a lot of room to grow up in, so this was absolutely perfect. There is plenty of space for them to run around and ample trees to climb."

The Dwyers have a portion of private land, which they like, but the best thing is that they do not have to take responsibility for the rest of the grounds. The approach to the development is through electronic gates, down a tree-lined drive and the view from the properties is magnificent.

The communal grounds include an arboretum, a meadow of wild flowers and a tennis court. The remaining eight properties, which are available through the agent, Browns, are priced from £225,000 for a three-bedroom cottage up to £535,000 for a five-bedroom house. The two remaining three- to four-bedroom homes in the manor house are priced at £355,000 and £360,000.

In London, or in any city, buying in a development which has large communal gardens is even more attractive and there are several properties now on the market which show that outside space is a major selling point.

At Westfield, in one of the busier and more built-up parts of Hampstead, off Finchley Road in north

London, nine blocks of large luxury apartments are being built by Rialto Homes in the old four-acre gardens that belonged to Westfield College.

Each block takes the name of one of the trees found on the site and as many specimen trees as possible are being preserved. About two-and-a-half acres of open space will remain. Most of this is being landscaped and there is also a courtyard with a water feature and seating area.

"One of the more significant aspects of Westfield is its very large open space, which is unusual for this area," says Neville Casin-gena of Goldschmidt & Howland, which is selling the development jointly with FPD Savills. Prices in the first phase of 27 two- and three-bedroom apartments range from £300,000 to £350,000.

"There are several properties on the market which show that outside space is a selling point"

Lockes Wharf, a seven-and-a-half-acre site being developed by St George in London's Docklands, will have 424 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and 40 three- and four-bedroom town houses. About a quarter of the development will be open space with two large formal landscaped gardens with fountains, plus an ornamental water garden and a public riverside walk.

"Purchasers want to feel they are not living on top of one another," says Simon Osborne of Knight Frank, who is based at the sales office at the development. Currently available are two penthouses with two bedrooms for £339,950, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments from £159,950 to £324,950 and one three-bedroom town house for £239,950.

Much further west, but also on the Thames, is Harrods Village, which is being built by Berkeley Homes ('Thames Valley'). "This development is a Mecca for those who love gardening and the outdoors," says Jeff Parton, managing director of the development firm. "Gardening has become a leading leisure activity and



A model of the new Westfield development in north London

as a result homeowners and developers are looking at maximising the size of their gardens."

Careful attention has therefore been given to creating as much horticultural interest as possible with limes and Japanese cherry trees being planted around the properties. On top of the leisure centre there will be a large roof garden that will extend to gardens beside the centre. Along the river is yet another open green area that will be landscaped.

The development is part new buildings and part conversion. There will be 127 new apartments and town houses, and the lovely old Harrods

depository buildings are being turned into 123 apartments. Prices for properties currently available range from £299,500 for a new two-bedroom apartment up to £537,500 for a three-bedroom refurbished apartment. Sixty-two apartments are due to be released in the river-front depository building in May.

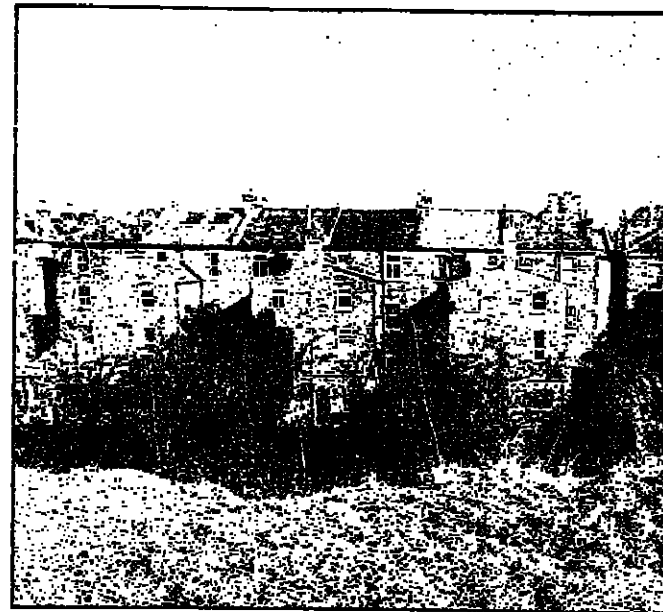
To find three acres of grassland in the centre of a popular place like Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, is highly unusual, but this is what is being offered at Wethered Park. Charles Church has built a highly attractive crescent of town houses along with cottages and apartments overlooking all this open space,

which will be private to the residents.

It will be seeded to meadow grass for people to enjoy looking at and wandering in, although dogs will only be allowed in the park if they are kept on a lead. There will also be a formal area with a gazebo. Properties still to be sold include a selection of two-bedroom apartments from £265,000 to £295,000 and one two-bedroom cottage for £250,000.

Further information: Browns, 01483 531166; Goldschmidt & Howland, 0171-435 4404; FPD Savills, 0171-472 5000; Lockes Wharf, 0171-521 6280; Harrods Village, 0181-741 7401; Wethered Park, 01628 4730700

STEPPING STONES ONE WOMAN'S PROPERTY STORY



Old houses are right up Liz Keyworth's street

LIZ KEYWORTH, an artist, has bought four properties in East Dulwich, south London, but it was not her first choice of location. "I was on the brink of buying a pretty house in Brixton thinking it was trendy; but thieves broke in and stole the fireplaces," she says. "After squatters defaced it I decided to head for safer, more reliable East Dulwich."

In 1984, Liz paid £52,000 for a first-floor flat with access to a garden via a spiral staircase. "I'd been given £5,000 and thought I should buy somewhere and get lodgers in to pay the mortgage, leaving me free to paint," she says.

The plan worked. Liz's mortgage was helped by "two French boys in one room and a Japanese girl in another" and her career benefited. "I didn't have to worry and it left me free to spend months painting in France." In 1991 she considered selling when the flat was valued at £94,000. A year later she was pregnant and in a relationship, and because "spiral staircases and babies don't mix", she decided to sell the property that was now valued at just £56,000.

Liz advertised the flat herself and sold to the first person to reply for £64,000 – not the giddy heights of a year earlier but the experience left her cynical about estate agents. "It shows that they undervalue in order to sell."

By spring 1993 she had found a semi-detached house for £90,000, with four bedrooms and an attic for a studio. Liz transformed the garden and began work on the house: "I got a builder to install a hand-built kitchen, decorate and make the place bright and cheery."

Liz loved her much-improved house but also found herself in love with the builder so, less than a year later, she sold for £115,000. "We could have got more but it was a difficult situation and I was in a desperate hurry to sell."

With her share Liz was forced to "take a downward leap" and, with her builder, bought a "cottagey four-bedroom house" for £51,000, which again needed total

renovation, making it difficult to get a mortgage. "We borrowed from friends to do the basic work but it was a very dicey time."

The family stayed until 1996 when they decided that they wanted another child and more space. "We knew that we could make money but you couldn't swing a cat and the area was going up quickly," Liz began her search, this time single-mindedly. "To make a leap we had to go for another wreck and I didn't want a normal house with two through rooms and a kitchen out the back."

After selling their house for £99,000, their estate agent had just one house on the books which could satisfy Liz's requirements. "On paper it had everything: five bedrooms, garage, huge garden and conservatory," she said. "It was cheap, £105,000, so we thought it had to be all right."

When they went to view it, they found something they had not expected. The house had had its facade replaced with metal windows, a PVC door and pebble dash. "It was hideous," she said, "but anything is possible with a builder and we had to have it."

The couple have transformed the interior and are about to replace the facade. Once the work is complete, they estimate the house's value at around £300,000. They have no plans to move. "We're exhausted and we'll drop dead here."

GINETTA VEDRICKAS

Those moves in brief
1984: bought three-bedroom flat for £52,000, sold for £64,000.
1993: bought a four-bedroom house for £90,000, sold for £115,000 later that year.
Bought a four-bedroom cottage for £51,000, sold for £99,000.
1996: bought five-bedroom house for £105,000, worth around £300,000 when finished.

If you would like your moves to be featured write to: Nic Cicutt, Stepping Stones, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. £100 will be awarded for the best story printed by 31 June.

The customer comes last

Thousands of estate agents have failed to join an Ombudsman scheme. By Penny Jackson

ESTATE AGENTS have come in for some fierce criticism in the past week or so. A year after the Ombudsman scheme was widened, and even though it was hailed as a big step towards improving standards of customer care, the vast majority have failed to sign up. David Quayle, the Ombudsman for Estate Agents, is disappointed.

"We have gone 15 months and are still lacking the bulk to give us credibility and to give the consumer the choice he needs," he says. Out of a possible 10,000 or so high street offices only 2,759 have joined. Mr Quayle sees a membership of 5,000 as a critical figure in tipping the balance towards expediency. "I am clear that the future for any decent firm selling any product is to give consumers access to non-legal redress. If more do not sign up this year serious consideration will be given to making it statutory."

His words might be regarded as a warning to an industry that is already experiencing a growing consensus in favour of some form of licensing and mandatory standards of competence.

Requirement of the OEA is that a firm must have links with the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) or the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers (ISVA).

Anyone can complain to the Ombudsman and there is maximum compensation of £50,000. Last

year complaints within his remit rose 16 per cent. The largest award of £4,250 was made to a couple who were forced to pay an extra £4,000 after the agent had told the seller, wrongly, that they were unable to go ahead with their agreed purchase.

The Ombudsman also made awards of £1,000 for room dimensions that had been seriously miscalculated and £100 when an estate agent failed to spot that the seller had no planning permission for off-street parking.

So how can it work? David Bedford, of Bedfords, in Bury St Edmunds, is in no doubt that being a subscriber to the scheme takes the heat out of any potential dispute.

"Two or three times during the year when there has been a problem we have written to clients and stressed that if they remain unhappy they can take it further."

Nobody has, but it helps convince them that we are serious about resolving their complaint. We use the OEA logo on all our advertisements and notepaper."

Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, the chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, which has the largest contingent on the scheme, also feels frustrated at the slow take-up, particularly as he favours the voluntary route. "Agents have not yet recognised its benefits in promoting their commitment to high standards. Even in the best run organisations, small or large, things can go wrong, and surely the con-

sumer is entitled to some sort of consideration? Sellers should be more discerning in their choice of agent."

One of David Quayle's chief disappointments is that along with a large corporate group none of the top 30 estate agents has joined up. "They would send a powerful message in support of the image of estate agencies even though they perceive themselves as not needing the scheme. They would be seen as ambassadors for the highest possible standards." Among that group are many who operate to the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Ruaraidh Adams-Cairns, the director of FPD Savills, says that the RICS regulation is already demanding and protects the client with its own arbitration mechanism. It was not deemed necessary to take on more.

She says: "We make an enormous effort in dealing with customer complaints, whatever the issue. People rightly feel very angry if, say, they turn up to a view a house and no one is there. It's important to address the complaint immediately. I have sent out flowers as an apology for a missed appointment."

However, at the RICS they are far from sanguine about their members' dismissal of the Ombudsman scheme. An admonishing letter is on its way, urging them to join up. "We think it is the right way to move the whole industry forward," says Patricia Monahan, from the RICS

standards and practice department. But perhaps the one area in most urgent need of policing and yet not covered by the Ombudsman is the rental sector. The numbers of complaints received by David Quayle over the past year has convinced him that lettings and management should be included.

One London landlord and his tenants would regard it as not before time. Abbey Commercial Investments, in Clapham, south-west London, put one of its few residential properties, a flat in Kensington, in the hands of an agent in west London. A director of the company says he has never come across such unprofessional behaviour.

He says: "They were very keen to get the tenants in even before the flat was ready and that was because the man did not want to miss his bonus payment. But worse was that, in order not to cause a delay, the agreements that the tenants and I signed were not the same."

"Each thought the other was responsible for the water rates, which is the stuff of dispute. But even more shocking was my first encounter with the young letting agent. He asked whether I wanted to sell and so I asked him to come up with a figure. He offered me a great deal less than I knew it was worth, saying he wanted to buy it for himself and went on about having a new baby. It breaks every rule in the book, but when I complained to the firm I never even got a reply."



"Surely the consumer is entitled to some form of protection"

Ian Torrance

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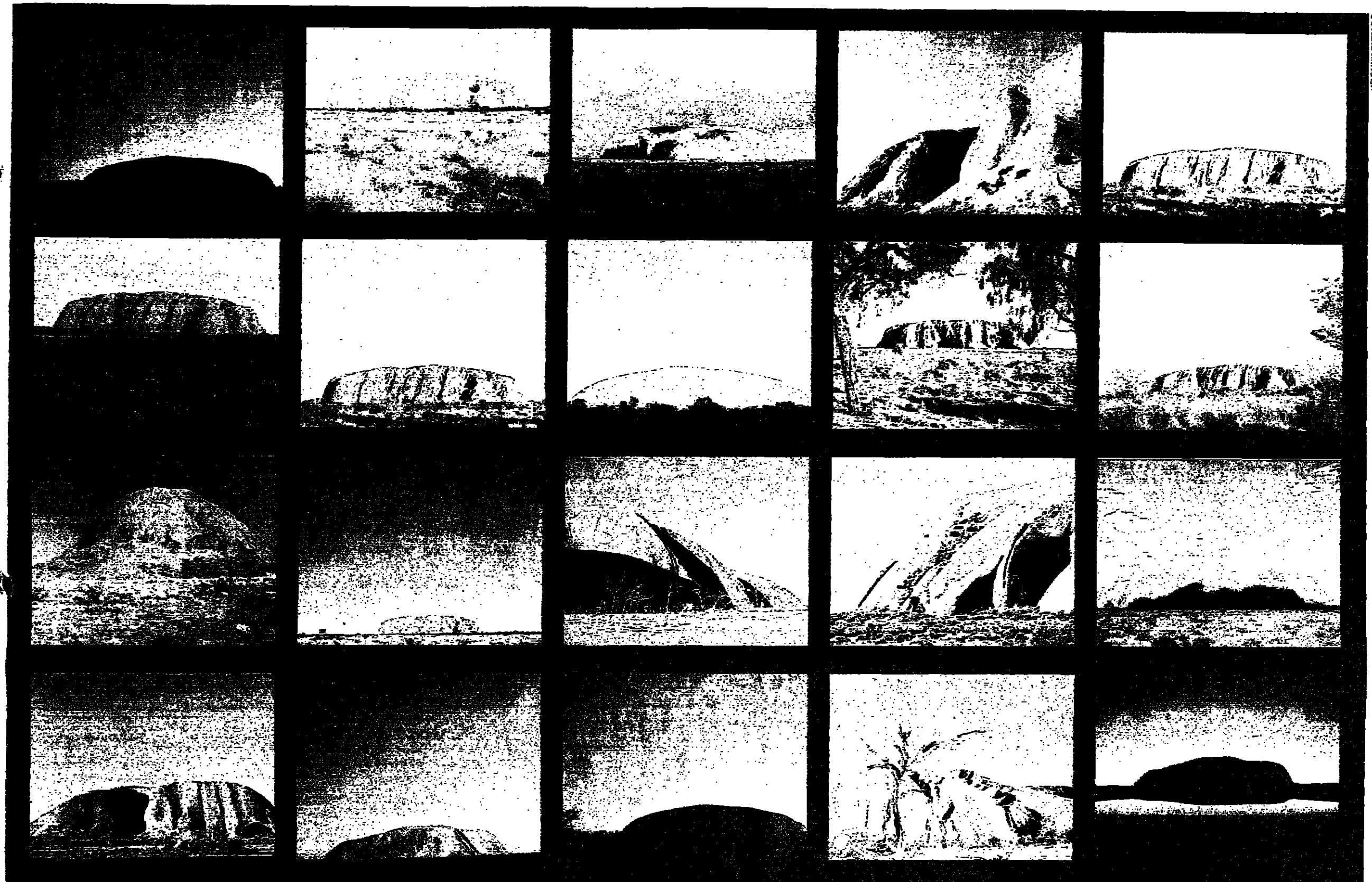
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OF THE ORCHID**

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**DESERT BLOOM:
LIBYA OPENS UP
TO TRAVELLERS**

TRAVEL, PAGE 19



CORBIS IMAGES

It is one of the great icons of nature, the navel of a continent. It is also the centre of a global industry with its own hotels and airport. As geological features go, it has immense raw talent. And like all places of significance, Ayers Rock has a side no one wants to see

BY THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

the Rock

Just outside the village of Bentham in Yorkshire there is a large rock – a rough mass some 12 feet high and deeply seamed, like a lump of Plasticine hastily balled-up and left abandoned on the moors. It is a tourist sight, this rock. We know it must be because a photograph of it features on the cover of the Bentham Tourist Information Centre leaflet, taking precedence over pictures of Bentham Golf Course or the view of Main Street or a sunlit bend of the local river. It is, you can't help feeling, a brave attempt to muster a distinguishing landmark. But on the international scale of monolith celebrity, this object barely registers. Just enough people visit it to keep a faint path marked out through the moor and, once there, they do what people do with big, isolated lumps of rock. They walk round it, scratch their initials on its flanks, or climb it to look down on the tussocky ordinariness it interrupts – in this case, by a set of small steps chipped into the stone. Its gravitational pull is pretty meagre, to be honest – strong enough to overcome the inertia of an empty afternoon, perhaps, or to pin down the untethered end of a Sun-

day walk – but the stone's sphere of influence is strictly limited. Imagine it 100 times higher, though, and one and a half miles in length. Then take away the scenic competition – the ledged shoulder of Ingleborough in the distance and the rise and fall of the fells around it. Set it, massive and inexplicably detached, in a sea of sand and scrub, and you may well find that it needs an airport all of its own to process its pilgrims. We know this, too, because geology has performed the experiment already in the Northern Territory of Australia, the location of the world's best-selling monolith, Ayers Rock (or Uluru if you wish to be correct), an international superstar beside Bentham's modest pebble. The difference between these two stones isn't simply one of quantity. Bentham's big stone is probably a glacial erratic, part of the geological litter left by the last ice age; Australia's is what geologists call an inselberg, its famous profile only the protruding tip of a vast upended plate of arkosic sandstone embedded in the desert. Bentham's rock offers no light effects to compare with Uluru's rosy glow, that rusty weathering which plays variations with sunrise and sunset for the benefit of a marshalled audience of

tourists, whose massed coaches bring a little bit of Watford Gap to the Australian outback. But they have things in common too. Both are marked by the signs of human adoption, whether it is a crude flight of steps or the faint trail up one flank of Uluru, polished by countless trainers. Both also have stories snagged around their bulk – Uluru's net of Aboriginal tales and a kind of Celtic Dreaming in the case of the Bentham stone, involving a nasty stone-throwing incident between Irish and Cumbrian giants. Above all, they both have a kinship in sticking out of the landscape, and that very distant cousinship prompts the question of whether Uluru's appeal isn't simply an enormously magnified version of the idle curiosity and speculation that play around any anomaly – perhaps Aboriginal reverence and mass tourism are not irreconcilable opposites, just different expressions of the same shared human instinct. Uluru had to wait patiently for its global celebrity. Sure, it played big locally for several thousand years, if we're to believe the respectful recountings of tribal lore offered by the guides who administer the touristic sacraments. But even then there are grounds for doubts about the range of its fame. CP

Mountford, one of the early authorities of the rock, made an ethnological visit shortly before the Second World War, hoping to fix the skein of Aboriginal stories told about the site. He had some difficulty in finding a reliable guide: a man from Ernabella, a mission station a little over 100 miles from Uluru, was proposed for the job but turned out never to have visited the place. And even when Mountford found a local, the tales he gathered turned out to be less than reliable, bent out of true by the need to conceal and the desire to please. The raw talent of the thing itself was there from the very beginning, of course: "The most wonderful natural feature I have ever seen," wrote William Christie Gosse, the first white man to get close to it, and those who followed him echoed his marveling – their awe amplified by a kind of gulping relief at finally having something on which they could fix their vision, after that apparently endless monotony of dunes and spinifex. But it took canny management to recognise its mass-market potential, that this was an object that could cross over from exploration to tourism. Len Tuijt, who covered what may have been the most extended postal route in history – from Darwin to Alice Springs – saw the

possibilities of taking tourists to the rock just after the war but the state tourism agency didn't share his vision. Who, after all, would travel two days in considerable discomfort to look at a big rock? Only those, surely, for whom the discomfort was the point and the rock simply a way of setting some limit to it, of having a rewarding point at which to say "enough". But Tuijt was right in his intuition and slow advances by road, painstakingly pushed through the sand dunes with a grader, coincided with the beginning of an airborne invasion from Alice Springs. Eddie Connellan, a local flier, first landed next to the rock in 1938, began regular services 30 years later and was a guest of honour when the airport named after him (and constructed with private funds) was opened in 1962. This was the true end of the rock's isolation, the end of its brief life as a fabled curiosity and the beginning of its career as a national navel stone – in its way as carefully engineered a cultural construct as the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In his book about Uluru, *The Rock*, Barry Hill quotes the reactions of one of the last men to visit. Continued on page 2

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TO VIEW
THE MARKET

FOR SALE
EARTH TO IRELAND

FREE BROCHURE

TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY

REAL LIFE



Do you want a nude painting of yourself? Hero Brown did

CULTURE



David Thomson on Billy Wilder's masterpiece

REVIEW



Is this Linda McCartney's most haunting photograph?



Sarah Raven tells you how to grow your own exotic salads

PLUS

Annalisa Barbieri: how I quit the gym and got a life

Jan Morris's diary from Venice

Serbs in Britain

Sir: There are several thousand Serbs living in Britain, and some of them have been mounting a protest against the Nato bombing outside Downing Street. That is natural enough. Their country is under attack, and their friends and relatives are in possible danger. And in this country, protests against government policies are generally permitted.

But do the Serbs in Britain understand why their country is under attack? I have yet to hear or read a single statement from any Serb which suggests that they do.

And do any of them oppose and condemn what their countrymen, under the guidance of the regime in Belgrade, are doing to the Albanians of Kosovo? Unlike their compatriots at home, they have ample opportunity to learn from the media what is happening. Do they not believe what they can see and hear of executions, massacres and the mass expulsion of people from their homes and their land?

If they do not, we must conclude that the parallel with so many Germans in World War Two, who simply refused to believe what they heard about the fate of the European Jews, is all too close.

ANTHONY ARBLASTER
Sheffield

Sir: Rupert Cornwell's analysis of the problems inherent in an assault on Serbia by Nato ground forces (9 April) leaves us with another alternative: to arm and, as necessary, train the KLA from bases in Albania.

They might not be ideal protégés, but if the air war by itself does not achieve its objective, this could be the least bad solution. We should remember that the defeat of the Bosnian Serbs in 1995 was brought about not by Nato air attacks alone, but by retrained local forces, mainly Croatian.

In any case, the air war can be continued, but with the aim of supporting KLA operations in Kosovo, rather than laying waste more and more of Serbia's infrastructure. Of course, the end result would be independence for Kosovo, rather than just autonomy within Serbia; but the Rambouillet terms are surely obsolete now anyway.

MICHAEL LAIRD
Havant, Hampshire

Sir: The Nato propaganda machine assures us that there is now a majority in Europe in favour of the continued bombing of Serbia and Kosovo. Well, they would, wouldn't they? I missed out on this particular referendum and would like to make it very clear there is a minority of at least one.

The bombing aided and abetted President Milosevic in the immediate and brutal displacement of hundreds of thousands of his people, who but for the Nato action would still be in their own homes, albeit under dire threat, but still with hope. There are always alternatives to brute force, but Nato chose aerial bombardment, so sadly reminiscent of the worst excesses of the many wars that distinguish our century.

Bomber Harris earned his unlovely sobriquet for supporting the destruction of Dresden to curtail the Second World War in Europe, a policy of arguable efficacy. Are we now to have Bomber Blair leading us into a Third World War, to the resounding strains of "Onward Christian Soldiers" perhaps?

STEPHEN GOLDBY
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 4DL and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk (e-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address). Letters may be edited for length and clarity



Working Poland No 6: A welder at the Gdansk shipyards, the birthplace of Solidarity

Tom Puston

expected to die off within about 10 years.

Stormont's red squirrels have survived with the help of special red-only feeders that provide enough extra food to stop them succumbing to the competition from the greys. These were provided by the Ulster Wildlife Trust and Northern Ireland's Environment and Heritage Service. The groundsmen of Stormont Castle alerted the Wildlife Trust to the problem in the first place and now maintain the feeders. By working together, these three groups have saved the red squirrels.

The red squirrel is threatened with extinction in the UK and it can only be saved if government, conservationists, landowners and the public can work together. What has happened in Stormont gives us hope because it shows us that co-operation is not an impossible task. Co-operation at Stormont - that sounds like the start of another allegory.

HELEN BAKER
The Wildlife Trusts
London SW1

Business surveys

Sir: Nick Herbert of Business for Sterling accuses the CBI, not for the first time, of having ruled out a "completely random survey of business" last year (Right of Reply, 9 April). This is quite untrue.

The decision was reached last summer was brofod. First, to encourage The Financial Times to conduct a completely random survey of business and to accept their results as a good measure of opinion when they came out. And second, to focus the CBI Survey, as before, on CBI members, thus allowing comparison with previous surveys.

This would be made quite clear from the minutes which Mr Herbert quotes, if he would only cease quoting one sentence out of context of the sentence immediately following.

ADAM TURNER
CBI Director-General
London WC1

IN BRIEF

Sir: Joanna Waller (letter, 8 April) wonders why atheists like me spend so much time discussing religion. It is because aspects of it continue to force themselves into our lives: from enforced religious holidays, to enforced slots on public radio, to enforced bishops in the enforced House of Lords, to those enforced infernal church bells....

Need I go on?
RICHARD GUISE
Member, National Secular Society
Droghda, Derbyshire

Sir: So, it's official. Mobile phones make you smarter ("Mobiles" speed reaction time", 8 April).

Not the buffoons who use the damned things on the trains I travel on, they don't. BARRY LINTON
Reading, Berkshire

New Europe

IN AN article concerning the euro by Diane Coyle published on 8 April, we reported that New Europe, an organisation chaired by Lord Owen, was funded by Rupert Murdoch. We have been asked to make it clear that New Europe has never received and does not receive, directly or indirectly, any funding from Mr Murdoch or any of his businesses. We apologise for the mistake.

Trial by TV

Sir: Jeff Anderson, the editor of Tonight, offers us a self-advertisements aimed directly at consumers are a highly effective way of stimulating demand, but there is little evidence to support claims that the overall health of the nation has also improved ("Drug firms demand right to advertise", 8 April). Indeed, 64 per cent of doctors in an American survey said they would like to see the practice decrease or be abolished.

With regard to the argument that advertising increases awareness and detection of disease, one has to ask if this could not be better achieved through independent public health campaigns. Before we go any further down the road toward direct-to-consumer advertising, we need to ask ourselves whether medicines are like commodities. When advertising persuades us that we want or need most consumer products, we can usually weigh up the value we place on them relative to our priorities, with price as the moderator. Not only do European consumers not pay for the real cost of medicines (a civilised and equitable component of the NHS), but they are not in a position to make an informed choice about what to consume.

A full and proper public debate is essential before we

Care over drugs

Sir: The American experience may show that advertisements aimed directly at consumers are a highly effective way of stimulating demand, but there is little evidence to support claims that the overall health of the nation has also improved ("Drug firms demand right to advertise", 8 April). Indeed, 64 per cent of doctors in an American survey said they would like to see the practice decrease or be abolished.

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A full and proper public debate is essential before we

slide into a situation where the drugs industry has direct and unmanaged links with consumers.

NICK STACE
Consumers' Association
London NW1

Divided Cyprus

Sir: Mr Paul Hamilos (letter, April 5) has the facts on Cyprus back to front. The problem did not begin in 1974 - it was ethnic cleansing of the Turkish Cypriots by Greek Cypriots 1963-74 which created the present state of affairs.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home wrote in his memoirs, "I was convinced that if Makarios could not bring himself to treat the Turkish Cypriots as human beings, he was inviting the invasion and partition of the island."

The American Under-Secretary of State, George Ball, said, "Makarios's central interest was to block off Turkish intervention so that he and his Greek Cypriots could go on happily massacring Turkish Cypriots. Obviously we would never permit that." The fact is, however, that neither the US, the UK, the UN, nor anyone, other than Turkey, ever took effective action to prevent it.

As for the Greek Cypriot missing persons, the evidence of the Greek Orthodox priests who buried them is that almost all of them were killed in the mayhem which Greek

Cypriots unleashed upon each other before the Turkish army had even landed.

It is time the world recognised that we the Turkish Cypriots are entitled to live in peace in our own state, and stopped treating the Greek Cypriots, despite the atrocities they committed, as if they were the lawful government of the whole island.

HAKKI MUFTUZADE
London Representative,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
London WC1

Squirrel entente

Sir: Your "man in the underground" is right to point out that the red and grey squirrels sharing a home at Stormont Castle are not likely to be found sharing a peanut or building a nest together (Pandora, 9 April). Their behaviour may not provide a blueprint for peace in Northern Ireland but, luckily for the threatened red squirrel, the whole story amounts to much more than a cute allegory for the province's political troubles.

Red squirrels have occupied the grounds of Stormont Castle probably for centuries and, when the grey squirrels started to arrive just a few years ago, their fate should have been sealed. Once grey squirrels arrive on the scene, the reds can be

The Rock

Continued from page 1

it before its most recent metamorphosis. Arthur Groom went the hard way - cross-country by camel and, when he finally reached the rock, he recorded his sentiments, as all travellers did: "I felt like an ant at the door of a cathedral," he wrote. That struck a note of religious humility which was to be repeated countless times, whether in the formal speeches of politicians ("It is part of the spiritual heart of Australia," said the Governor-General when he handed the rock back to its native owners in 1985) or in the piety of tourists who choose not to climb on what they accept as Aboriginal sacred ground, and who can carry off a souvenir T-shirt

"I didn't climb Ayers Rock" to mark their sacrifice to the gods of uneasy white conscience.

There's no particular grounds to doubt Groom's sincerity, but it's hard not to wonder whether there might also have been a thin fibre of disappointment, stuck there in the teeth of his achievement. Did it fully meet those huge expectations? Or did he wonder what to do with his pent-up anticipation once he was there?

These days, of course, the visitor has already been countless times already, by means of that vast profusion of virtually identical photographs - so many now that they would probably form a pile as large as the rock itself. And where the pioneers strained to catch their first glimpse of this fabled spot, tourists may find themselves straining not to see it too soon, from an angle or a distance that won't match the mental template. Because the rock does

have a wrong angle, or rather an invisible one. Like a famous screen actress with photo approval, it is almost always photographed from the same side, where the light falls most favourably and its features are most nearly symmetrical.

And this is one key to its cultural triumph over its closest rival, the nearby formation called Kata Tjuta or the Olgas - an astonishing congregation of vast monolithic humps, which rise out of the desert like a child's drawing of mountains, plumply curved and featureless.

"Mount Olga is the more wonderful and grotesque," wrote Ernest Giles, the second white man to reach the spot, "Mount Ayers the more ancient and sublime." He was right - Uluru's simplicity of line and its setting on a clean horizon give it an architectural quality, a sense of enigmatic, consciously shaped presence which the Olgas will never have. Uluru looks like an

altar stone for some forgotten celebration, an answer to the human need for a handhold in the midst of vacancy. As an anchoring point it is unsurpassable, whether it is a cartographer's triangulated net of measurements you want to fix, or a mythology of creation, or a seven-night Red Centre coach trip.

Sublimity can be a problematic product for the modern tourist, though. I overheard a bored flock of American travellers gathered round the pool at the Sails in the Desert Hotel, a discordant echo of the pink galahs which range themselves along the canopies to drink from this chlorinated oasis: "We've done the sunset, the sunrise and the camel ride," said a New York matron. "All I want to know now is how to get out of this place."

It was a whine of claustrophobia in a place that is an agoraphobic's nightmare - but it wasn't entirely preposterous.

The Ayers Rock Resort (brand recognition takes precedence over cultural deference when it comes to commerce) exists only because of the rock - and yet the rock is impervious to the average tourist's demand for novelty. What it does best is doing nothing at all - for all the faintly strained ballyhoo about colour changes and sunrise viewings.

Launching a new marketing push in Australia last month, the resort management acknowledged the problem - "Hot, dry and dusty, with nothing to do but climb the rock and go home" is the general perception of Ayers Rock Resort, conceded the first line of their pitch. They have some cause to be anxious because visits to the Northern Territory have been declining in recent years. Uluru itself may buck the trend - at the last count over half a million people visit every year - but if it doesn't it won't be for want of effort on the part of

the resort management, who have now identified a "mind, body and spirit" strategy to appeal to new customers. Climb the rock, learn about its associated myths and then commune with its immemorial mysteries, champagne glass in one hand to kick-start your enervated powers of primitive awe. It is a strategy in which the demands of modern tourism and ancient reverence begin to approach each other, assisted by the supermarket-trolley belief systems of New Age questers.

Uluru provides one answer to the conundrum of how you "do" the void - that vast, indifferent mass proving equally responsive to almost any urge visited against it, from Aboriginal dreaming to the modern songlines of international tourism. If you can't get to Australia though, try Benham, because however modest its version of monolithic pleasures, they are essentially the same.

THE INDEPENDENT

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The soccer business has returned to a level playing field

IT SEEMED to be expecting too much of this Government to stand up to Rupert Murdoch, the "billionaire tyrant" as he described himself on *The Simpsons*, part of his own Fox TV empire. Even this newspaper fell prey to cynicism when, in the Budget last month, the Chancellor announced that decisions on competition policy would in future be contracted out to an independent commission. It seemed that this was a device - a welcome one, but a device none the less - to take sensitive decisions on takeovers out of the hands of politicians. Just as an independent Bank of England absolves Gordon Brown of responsibility for unpopular interest-rate decisions, so an independent Competition Commission will in future excuse Stephen Byers from having to upset New Labour's business friends.

In the meantime, so the uncharitable thought ran, Mr Byers would let the Murdoch bid for Manchester United through in return for a series of worthless promises not to use a bridgehead in the Premier League to gain an unfair advantage for BSkyB.

We are delighted and relieved to admit that we were wrong. The Labour Government's posture of defensive cringe towards Mr Murdoch's cheap press interests has, at a stroke, been replaced by the confident stance of squaring up to a bully. This is no mere side-issue of the Government's self-respect: the policy of cringe was not even in Labour's own interest, and it was certainly not in the country's interest.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission verdict that the BSkyB takeover would have been against the public interest was right. It was not a straightforward judgement - the idea of fair competition in the crazy economics of sport is a peculiar one. Even in America, land of the free market and home of the brave capitalist, the multi-billion industries of baseball, football and basketball are run by cartels enjoying special exemptions from competition law.

At one level, sport is simply a branch of the entertainment industry, and should be treated in the same way as the movies, television and ten-pin bowling. In this country, if you do not think you are getting a good show for your money from BSkyB, or from going to see a live football match, then you can go to see *Shakespeare In Love* or go bowling instead.

But soccer is not - yet - a show put on by a single company for consumers to choose freely in the marketplace. It is a sport which grew organically from thousands of local teams, sustained by the loyalties of millions of supporters. Even Man Utd began as Newton Heath, a local railway works' team. For one company to cream off the value made possible by these local loyalties would be oppressive. But it would also be counter-productive from the point of view of economics. If soccer is to thrive as a business, it must thrive as a sport, which requires it to nourish its roots and to pay attention to the non-commercial loyalties of the fans. That is why the flogging of Ryan Giggs shirts for a small fortune is a short-sighted business practice.

Nor are individual clubs genuinely competitive corporations operating in a free market. Their product is the game: a game requires two teams; and repeat purchases require a series of games which need to be organised, and a winner declared according to the rules



JAW
JAW
TOM LUBBOCK
10-04-99

of sport rather than the rules of the market. Man Utd, as the Coca-Cola of soccer, being the world-wide brand leader, is already close to achieving such a dominance of the Premiership that it could result in the entire competition being rendered both boring and pointless. That would not be good for business.

Even as a business, however, soccer is much more complex than that because the value of the game lies in its television rights, which means that the loyalties that are generated in one - apparently competitive - market can be used as leverage in order to prop up a dominant position in another market. That was Mr Murdoch's strategy: to use sport as a lever to maintain his dominance in pay-TV, which in turn cross-reinforces his dominant position in newspapers (which is where we declare an interest).

He wanted to buy Man Utd as an insurance policy. His near-monopoly of televised football is threatened from two different directions. First, the Office of Fair Trading is still investigating the Premiership cartel. If it concludes that it operates against the public interest, BSkyB's deal to broadcast Premiership games is off. Secondly, digital technology gives other broadcasters the means to charge people for watching television, which means they can match the huge amounts BSkyB can offer for the television rights to Premier League games.

The decision by the MMC and Mr Byers means that when the rights come up for renegotiation, Mr Murdoch will be competing on something resembling a level playing field. That is good for English football. Just as important, it is good for a diverse, competitive and plural media in this country.

The familiar diatribe of war zones, from Rwanda to Belfast

I WAS coming out of the Continental Hotel when the sound of the explosion rolled over the mountain. "Boom boom Nato," shouted the taxi driver. The tremor had distracted him from the important question of what fare I should pay. With hundreds of journalists in town, the predatory instincts of Skopje's taxi-men are rampant. All journeys involve a protracted haggle, but my driver had been unmoved by what he imagined were the sounds of war across the border and he wanted to talk politics. "Clinton bloody crazy, Milosevic bloody crazy. Everybody crazy," he said. I had to agree. After three days in Macedonia I feel I have entered a narrative of the most profound strangeness. It is three hours from England as the crow flies, and, as I write, the same spring sunshine is bathing London and Skopje. But in 15 years of reporting from war zones I have never felt the same degree of strangeness, the feeling of a world turned upside down.

You start out at the Swissair desk at Heathrow airport, and stand in line behind the people heading for skiing holidays in the Alps. There are bright clothes and there is a lot of laughter. There are many businessmen in the queue. Serious men in fine suits travelling to Geneva and Zurich. One of them is talking on a mobile phone and stops his conversation abruptly as my flask jacket and helmet roll topple from the trolley and clank on to the floor. But apart from this brief upset, it is a normal morning in Europe.

In Zurich the sun is shining and the Swiss countryside is neat and pretty and safe. And then, more quickly than you can imagine, you are coming in to land at Skopje amid the rows of Nato transport planes. Just outside the



FERGAL KEANE
The Macedonian taxi driver pointed at some Albanians: 'They have 10, 15 children so that they can outnumber us'

place over. Have you seen how big the families are?" He pointed at a group of children playing soccer in a park. "They have 10, 15 children so that they can outnumber us. And now that the refugees have come across, they think they will have a Greater Albania soon."

By the time we reached the Aleksander Palace hotel, the driver had worked himself into a frenzy of disgust for these Albanians who wanted to drive him out of his own country. It was a familiar diatribe. I had heard it in one form or another in Belfast, Rwanda, South Africa and a few other hotbeds of ethnic conflict. The fear that somebody will take what we have, that somebody will want to change us into something we are not, the fear that they will swamp us and that we will cease to be ourselves. It is the psychology of the threatened and it eats away at fine notions of tolerance and inclusivity. I don't suggest that all Macedonians feel this way about the Albanians, but most of those I've spoken to feel that they are under threat

and that Nato's attacks on Slobodan Milosevic are simply pushing them one step closer to a bitter ethnic battle.

And so when you ask yourself how on earth the Macedonian government could have treated the Albanian refugees with such obvious contempt - confining them at the border, forcing them on to buses and planes to get them out of the country - consider the fear and the barely suppressed anger of the majority population here. They have thus far escaped being dragged into the Yugoslavian wars of succession. It has taken political guile of which few Western politicians would be capable to deal with what corresponds like to call a "fragile ethnic balance". In other words, any increase in the resident Albanian population - at present some 15 per cent of the national total - and you are sliding towards disaster.

It is not hard to understand why the Macedonians would want rid of the refugees as quickly as possible. But the forced expulsions have left a deep reservoir of bitterness. The Kosovo Albanians feel that they have been treated like animals. As Mimoza Butigi, a 21-year-old law student from Pristina, told me: "They beat us and forced us on to buses. They wouldn't tell us where we were going. I feel as if I am lost in space. I have run out of words for the way I feel. Yes, animals, that is how they made us feel."

I met her, crammed into a room with 20 other people, in a decrepit Albanian army base in the border town of Pogradec. They had just spent 11 hours on buses, winding over mountain roads as the Macedonians pushed them yet further away from Kosovo. It was an extraordinary sight, central to that narrative of strangeness I

Prosecute the war, but hold back the bombing for tonight

"THE PRESIDENT believed military intervention was morally justified, but he fretted privately that he was being forced to act at the worst possible moment: 'I can't believe they got me into this. How did this happen? We should have waited until after the elections.'" Some will say that this account of Bill Clinton's decision to invade Haiti by George Stephanopoulos, his former press officer, does not serve the presidency well. Mr Stephanopoulos's candid memoir, *All Too Human*, exposes the White House war machine as a rickety, opinion-poll-driven, make-it-up-as-you-go-along contraption.

The accounts of how President Clinton made decisions on Haiti, Bosnia and Iraq hardly inspire confidence that the right decisions are now being made for the right reasons on Kosovo.

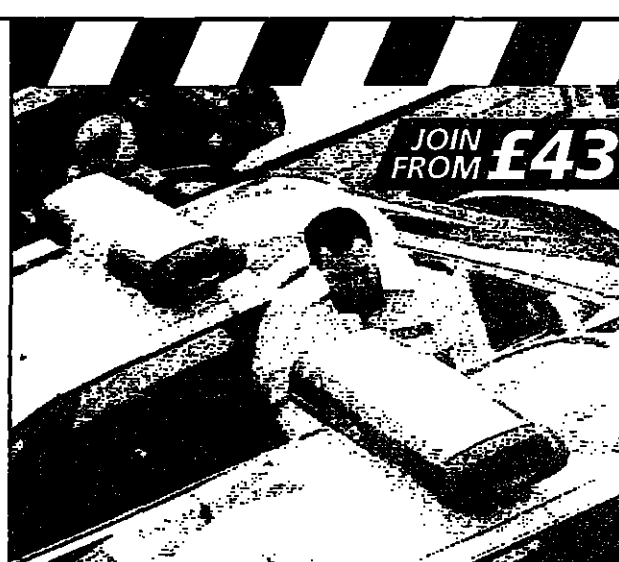
Except for one thing. What comes through clearly is the dramatic shift in American policy from that of defending "vital" national interests to one of altruism. Following the end of the Cold War, President Clinton's obsession with opinion-polling reinforced the shift. In none of his foreign adventures, even in the debacle of Somalia, have US trade or defence interests been directly threatened. In the case of Haiti at least, Mr Stephanopoulos says White House polling showed that the American people were "more willing to use our power to protect innocent civilians from torture and terror" than to protect national self-interest.

This should stand as a rebuke to those who accuse Tony Blair of blindly following the US, or who portray Nato as an instrument of US imperialism. The bottom line in the Balkans is that Nato's intervention is morally justified. For all the criticism of Mr Clinton and Mr Blair for their dependence on focus groups, a just war should be able to command public support, and can be fought with greater force if it does so.

The ends of returning the people of Kosovo to their homes and of ending Slobodan Milosevic's criminal campaign of ethnic terror are just. But the means by which they are pursued must also be just, and it is right that, in broad terms, they should be constrained by public opinion. Nato's leaders are wise to restrict the military strikes on Serbia so tightly in order to minimise civilian casualties, even if it means a longer war.

They would also be advised to halt the bombing for tonight, the night of the Orthodox Easter vigil, not so much to avoid the mentality of persecution among the Serbs (it is too late for that), but to assure public opinion back home that the war is being prosecuted with a tender conscience.

However, public opinion in western Europe is running ahead of the politicians in its preparedness to commit ground troops. It is possible that our leaders have not yet caught up with the changes in popular attitudes to wars fought for "humanitarian" ends described by Mr Stephanopoulos. But in this case, in the case of crimes against humanity committed in the European Union's waiting room, it is not up to President Clinton to give a lead. If ground troops are going to have to be deployed - and it is hard to see how they cannot be - the countries of the EU will have to shoulder the moral burden. Step forward Mr Blair, armed with opinion polls.



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MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Refugees from Kosovo • Lockerbie bombing • Interview with the Lawrence suspects • China and the US • Scottish elections

LOCKERBIE BOMBING

Opinion on the extradition of two Libyans to the Netherlands for trial under Scottish law

THE SCOTSMAN

DARK AND dirty American and British secrets as well as Libyan ones may be revealed during this trial. Many questions will arise over the next two years – the time likely to elapse before a verdict is given. There will be much obfuscation and duplicity. Scots should steel themselves for an imperfect outcome to the trial. The suspects may well finally go free and we will still only know part of the truth.

DAILY NEWS
Canada

IF THE Libyans are found innocent, or the case is thrown out, things get better for Gaddafi. Based on what is known about the case, this is quite possible, for it seems to depend on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence. There is, moreover, another plausible suspect: Iran, which in late 1988 was burning with resentment over the allegedly accidental shooting-down of an Iranian civil airliner over the Gulf by the US warship Vincennes. Ayatollah Khomeini had vowed vengeance, and an airliner for an airliner might have seemed an appropriate revenge to the young militants around him.

THE AUSTRALIAN

SANCTIONS AGAINST Libya could have been eased long ago if the accused had surrendered. Indeed, sanctions would never have been imposed if the Libyan government had not supported acts of terrorism against other states, a history that extends back before the Lockerbie bombing. The costs of pursuing the criminals are too high to be quantified but they have had to be paid. If this trial demonstrates that acts of terrorism will be punished the effort will have been worthwhile.

NEUE ZUERCHER
ZEITUNG
Switzerland

WHAT EXACTLY happened in Tripoli to give way is not clear. The readiness of the British and Americans

to have the proceedings against the two alleged terrorists not in Scotland itself but in a Scottish court in the Netherlands was not enough to account for the change of heart. There may be another, unwritten concession behind the hand over: a promise from the British and Americans not to stretch the trial in The Netherlands into a general reckoning of the Libyan secret service and the Gaddafi regime. The clients of the Libyans will remain hidden. Such a renunciation would be detrimental to the court's finding of the truth. No one could talk of anything more than a merely symbolic conclusion to the Lockerbie affair.

TIMES OF INDIA

NOW THAT the two suspects are in Scottish custody on Dutch soil, there is a possibility that the world will get to see whether there is, after all, a genuine case against them. Given the persistent allegations about the Lockerbie bomb having been planted as a result of a sting operation by US intelligence agencies, Washington desperately needs the Libyans to be convicted. Such a verdict would also open the door for more international pressure to be exerted on the Gaddafi government, which would suit Washington. The Scottish judges will be under great pressure; let us hope they are allowed to perform their duty in an objective and professional manner.

THE HERALD
Scotland

THE TRIAL is unlikely to be sensational but will feature a wealth of technical detail and evidence which tax the understanding of the three judges who will hear the case without a jury. If it will be a difficult time for the judges, the presentation of the case by prosecutors will also be far from easy. As Professor Robert Black has reminded us, many of the most important witness statements were gathered a decade ago and there is no guarantee that these witnesses will be traceable today. Yet the trial will go ahead, and for anyone with a belief in the primacy of justice, that will suffice for now.

The price of ethnic cleansing

LE MONDE
France

ON THE thirteenth day of Nato's bombardment campaign there was one result that no one contested: the proven pathetic incapacity of these raids to stop the "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovo ordered by the president of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic. If our objective really is about bringing back the refugees – at least a certain number of them – to Kosovo, it will involve one form or another of ground intervention. Even a negotiated return would impose a ground protection against Kosovars. Maybe it is time to tell the truth: the defence of the refugees' right to return is an empty statement if one continues to categorically exclude the sending of ground troops.

DAILY STAR
The Lebanon

THE THOUSANDS upon thousands of refugees, trudging their way through mud and snow to safety in Albania and Macedonia, are the ones who will continue to pay a price in human misery and suffering. Nato's air strikes, as much as Mr Milosevic's regular and militia forces, will in the end achieve the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. There will be very few Albanians left to cleanse.

FRANKFURTER
RUNDSCHAU
Germany

NATO DIDN'T imagine its 50th birthday this way. The alliance that for decades earnestly maintained peace finds itself not only in a war with Serbia, it is threatened with losing. The primary war goal of Nato – to stop the murder and expulsion in Kosovo – has not been achieved. In a few days Milosevic's troops and gangs will have completed their ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. Hundreds of thousands of Albanians are fleeing, and the gigantic task to aid them has become the central point of the war, far more so than the air attacks. A success for celebrator Nato can now only be measured on how quickly and in what dimension they succeed in giving back the Kosovars their homeland.



REFUGEES FROM KOSOVO

World comment on the exodus of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, resulting from Slobodan Milosevic's programme of ethnic cleansing

JERUSALEM POST
Israel

THE ENORMITY of the catastrophe currently taking place in Kosovo is now sinking in, and linking up with the collective memory of the Jewish people. One word rings with particularly stark familiarity: deportations. This is a cause with which

Israel should proudly identify, both morally and strategically. Israel should be noting the military ties that have reportedly arisen between Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein, and be encouraging any Western attempt to stand up to threats from aggressive dictators. As it turns out, the emotional humanitarian response on the part of many Israelis

may reflect a sounder analysis than the supposedly strategic thinking of the Israeli government.

NEW YORK TIMES
US

IN MACEDONIA, relations between the country's Albanian minority and its largely pro-Serb majority were always tense, and the government fears an influx of ethnic Albanians will lead to unrest. Nato must be sensitive to this danger. Stability in Macedonia keeps the war from spreading. But Macedonia's concerns are no excuse for its harsh treatment of the refugees and its attempt to limit their number. Nato should be carrying out its pledge to move 100,000 of them to temporary homes in Western Europe. The United States will house 20,000 at the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba. Only a few European countries have so far volunteered to take refugees. That must change, and quickly.

SYRIA TIMES

WHAT IS particularly miserable is the plight of the Kosovo people who were driven out of their country by force and intimidation. Even worse are the suggestions to transfer a lot of them to other countries either in Europe or further afield. The scene of Kosovars fleeing their country in large number brings back the memories of those Palestinians who were forced out of their country in the late Forties and early Fifties, by the Israeli army and Zionist gangs. History is repeating itself.

IRAN NEWS

AFTER THE disintegration of the Soviet Union, the West, led by the United States of America, adopted the doctrine of "New World Order" and tried to impose a unipolar system on the rest of the world by monopolising every aspect of international relations. The continuation of the Balkan war will benefit no one but the unholy alliance of Washington and Nato. Therefore, the bloodletting must be stopped immediately through diplomatic channels before it is really too late to save the lives of almost a million innocent Muslim Kosovars.

INTERVIEW WITH THE LAWRENCE SUSPECTS

Views on Martin Bashir's interview of the five alleged murderers of Stephen Lawrence, for Granada's 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald'

THE DAILY MAIL

THE REAL victims in all this, of course, are Neville and Doreen Lawrence. They have endured the murder of a much loved son. They have been betrayed by the incompetence of the police and the failure of the judicial system. Now they have suffered the anguish of watching the suspects in the case try to justify themselves on prime-time TV. Valid journalism? What we witnessed last night seemed more like a callous effort to improve the ratings. This was not a good night for British television.

THE GUARDIAN

EACH SUSPECT irritably protested his innocence and Bashir was methodically impatient. What viewers saw depended upon who you spoke to. Either it was a sensational scoop, the one every journalist had been chasing, answering the nation's questions and prov-



murder did they issue a denial – displayed without an ounce of passion. They made a mockery of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and last night, courtesy of ITV, they made a mockery of us. I suspected they were pathological liars before I watched their performance. Now I'm sure. (Sue Carroll)

THE EXPRESS

ing that current affairs are safe in Trevor MacDonald's hands. Or it was a tasteless stunt for a sensationalist series – an insult to the memory of Stephen Lawrence, and a jig on the grave of quality current affairs. (Decca Aitkenhead)

THE MIRROR

THEY WERE given a platform and the opportunity to speak the honest truth. But James and Neil Acourt did no such thing. Only when pressed by Bashir on the question of

THEY WILL be forever etched in the imagination as snarling racists, striking poses and throwing punches. Last night they went in for an image makeover. Interviewer Martin Bashir was admirable when he put David Norris on the spot, bluntly asking: "Would you call me a Paki?" And there was a certain satisfaction in watching Neil Acourt squirm as he was reminded that 26 people named him as one of the killers within 48 hours of the murder. But did the interviews achieve anything worthwhile? Of course not. (David Taylor)

CHINA AND THE US

Reactions to the Chinese President Zhu Rongji's visit to America

BOSTON HERALD
US

IT IS in our interest to have China in the World Trade Organisation, but not at any price. To work to get China into the WTO helps China conclude that the US is desperate for their friendship – the damage such a conclusion can do is far greater than any trade benefits.

SING TAO
China

BEIJING HAS given in to many US demands so it can join the WTO. However, some people have tried to challenge Clinton on these conditions. But China should be entitled to more benefits. Mr Clinton's enemies have failed to topple him over a series of sex and financial scandals, so they now target his policies on China. Mr Zhu may not break through in the US political arena, but he may be able to dismiss some of the objections to WTO membership.

TIN TIN DAILY
China

MANY IN Washington say that China's WTO dilemma cannot be solved during Mr Zhu's visit. The cooling of US pressure has given Mr Zhu time to gain the upper hand. If it fails, it will have been because of roadblocks put up by the US and not through any fault of Beijing – which has agreed to so many concessions already.

DAILY NEWS
US

OFFICIALS SHOULD confront Mr Zhu about the reasons our relationship with China sometimes is sour. Congress should look closely at the alleged illegal campaign contributions from China, and the charges of nuclear spying. But however frustrated we may become with their regime, China should not be punished by depriving it of the very things that will lead it toward more freedom.

SCOTTISH ELECTIONS

Reflections on the campaign for the Scottish Parliament, which officially began this week

DAILY TELEGRAPH

THE DANGER for Mr Salmond is that the other parties will take votes off him in the centre. Blair, according to one opinion poll, is Scotland's most popular politician – a fact which has surprised those observers not fully acquainted with the Scottish political scene. To him falls the task of maintaining his Government's overall popularity. Next Scottish voters use the forthcoming poll as a chance to voice their disapproval of it, as if this were a giant by-election. He must also articulate the benefits of keeping Scotland within the UK. In that task the other Unionist parties must be enthusiastic partners.

DAILY RECORD

THE SNP leader's epitaph will be "Too clever by half". A couple of months ago, the outcome seemed in doubt and a quarter of voters were still not committing themselves. Yet

now all the polls show Labour with a clear lead. The latest batch would give them 60 seats, just short of the overall majority. The new voting system virtually guarantees that no party will gain a clear majority. That does not mean we can't have sensible government. Even if he does not get the 65 seats, Donald Dewar should declare he will do no deals. Those who dare to bring down our first home-rule government must take the consequences of forcing us into another election and another chance for the Nats to push for separation.

THE MIRROR

WHAT CONCLUSIONS should be drawn before casting votes? Judging by the events of yesterday the parties have nothing new to say. They could abandon expensive public relations exercises and rely instead on the common sense of Scots to use their vote as they choose. But then that wouldn't be politics.

QUOTES OF
THE WEEK

"If you're a doctor you sleep with nurses, and if you are a photographer you sleep with models." David Bailey, celebrity photographer (above)

"Now it is the power of the nipple!" Sophia Loren, Italian actress

"I hope the Serbs are not playing poker with people's lives." Jamie Shea, Nato spokesman

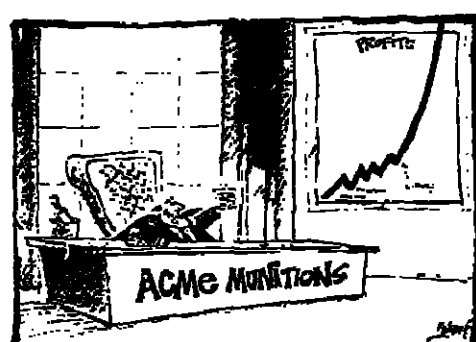
"I prefer art that's at least 200 years old, when artists really knew how to paint." Hugh Grant, actor

"There's a fine line between Governor of Texas and making a fool of yourself." George W. Bush, Governor of Texas

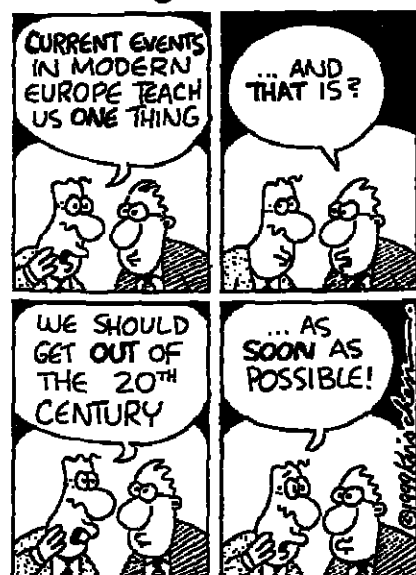
"I am scarcely a walking advert for a health farm." Ann Widdecombe, Conservative spokeswoman for health

"I just loved the idea of being grown up, mainly because I was a rather repellent teenager." Joanna Lumley, actor

THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD

THE COURIER MAIL
AustraliaPHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS
US

Dry Bones

JERUSALEM POST
IsraelTHE MORNING BULLETIN
AustraliaBALTIMORE SUN
US

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

MAIL &
GUARDIAN
South Africa

ISAAC MOFOKENG, who shot Johannesburg Zoo's Max the gorilla while fleeing police, was sentenced to 40 years in jail. He was convicted on 10 counts including rape, robbery and malicious damage to property (the gorilla). The magistrate called Mofokeng "a loose cannon, a danger to society and a walking time bomb – if you are left outside, the next crime you will commit is murder".

MIDDLE EAST
TIMES
Egypt

ALTHOUGH OFTEN portrayed

as exotic in Orientalists' writings and paintings, sandstorms, called khamaseen, are a gritty fact of life that Egyptians and other North Africans face every spring. This year the weathermen expect us to have anywhere from six to seven khamaseens. Severity of the storms cannot be predicted in a long-range forecast. The largest of khamaseens develop over the Atlas mountains of Morocco. An area of low pressure moves off the mountain range and slides on to the hot sandy Sahara. It moves quickly, gathering energy from the heat and pulling moist, cool air from Europe and the Mediterranean as it gathers strength. By the time it reaches Egypt, it has accumulated dust, seeds and insects from the west.

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

Does charity begin at the Great Wall of China?

"DEAR SUE Arnold, I am hoping to raise money for a worthy cause - the Stoke Poges Living Arts Trust - by pushing a barrel-organ (with live monkey) from Basingstoke to Budapest this summer. It promises to be an exciting project which will put SPLAT well and truly on the cultural map. So far we have been promised support by a number of local organisations, including The Stoke Poges Ladies Only Society of Herbalists, Stoke Poges Army Museum and Stoke Poges United Distilleries, who have very generously agreed to provide SPLASH, SPAM and SPUD back-up vehicles containing food, bedding and first aid respectively. I am nevertheless hoping to extend my appeal to a wider audience, which is why I have taken the liberty of writing to you..."

At least that one wasn't asking for money, only publicity. Most of the begging letters I get, and I've had a spate of them over the past two weeks, include half a dozen sponsor sheets and the unsolicited information that some individuals have given them up to £250.

To do what? A variety of intrepid things such as walking along the Great Wall of China to raise money for the British Heart Foundation, running across the Sahara for the Royal National Institute for the Blind Talking Books Appeal, and scaling the heights of Machupicchu in Peru for something undoubtedly worthy, but totally forgettable as far as I am concerned because it included Mariella Frostrup as one of its celebrity tour leaders.

This seems to be the latest fashion in charity sponsorship.



SUE ARNOLD
I've nothing against sponsoring, but forking out for someone's holiday is not the same

inspired I have no doubt by Comic Relief, which raised extra millions this year when they spotlighted famous people like Stephen Fry and

Geri Halliwell doing good deeds in the Third World. Thus, instead of cycling from Clapham Common to Dorking along with 2,000 other anonymous well-meaning folk, as I once did to raise money for the London Lighthouse Appeal, you get a bunch of celebrities cycling along with you, followed, and this is the crucial part, by TV cameras and newspaper reporters who will convert an otherwise non-newsworthy story into a page-one splash.

Break a couple of minor royals into the mixture and your celebrity cake will double in size. I know a well-heeled Austrian with connections who does nothing but organise glittering international charity events where, for between £5,000 and £10,000, you can rub shoulders with impoverished

maharajas at fund-raising cricket matches in Jaipur, or shoot bear in Siberia with claimants to the Romanov throne. (Did you know that the descendants of all the deposed monarchs of Europe have their own society? They have regular dinners in a backroom of the Pizza Express (they're all broke) and plan what they are going to do when they are back on their thrones.)

Don't misunderstand me, I've nothing against sponsored charities. If it weren't for their annual sponsored cycle ride from London to Brighton, heaven knows how the British Heart Foundation would pay for its equipment. On the other hand, from a sponsor's point of view, forking out for someone to fly to Beijing on what is basically a packaged holiday with optional excursions isn't quite the same

thing, especially as I happen to know the individual who wrote to me isn't short of a bob and could probably afford to buy the BHF a cardiograph all by herself. She's an inveterate traveller, usually goes with a group of like-minded mature Open University fine art students. Her last trip was the Constance Spry flower-arranging tour of the Hirds Kush.

OK, OK, she's raising money for charity with this promenade along the Great Wall, but I can't help feeling that the BHF would get more out of the pair of us if she emptied her piggy-bank. I sent a modest donation and we left China out of it. Running across the Sahara - now that's different. The man who wrote to me happens to be blind and said it would probably take him some time because the Sahara isn't

smooth sand. It is rocks and humps and hollows. Stumbling, rather than running, he said. When he's finished, it will be an achievement not a package holiday or a celebrity gig. Rather you than me, I said when I sent him his cheque.

The most ingenious sponsor-seeker I know of was the student who planned to drive from London to Sydney to raise money for charity and wrote to all the Hilton Hotels between said capitals asking for free accommodation.

Which precise charity he was supporting or how much he raised we never found out. He was last heard of at the Delhi Hilton, no doubt rubbing shoulders with impoverished maharajas at fund-raising cricket matches. It was probably better in the old days, when charity began at home.

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

JENNY PITMAN, RACEHORSE TRAINER

Feisty queen of the National

THERE IS always a story in The Grand National. Even a random sample over the last five decades shows how the race consistently delivers an emotionally charged drama. Take the collapse of the Queen Mother's horse, Devon Loch, in sight of the winning-post (1956); or the shock winner after a pile-up of horses (the 100-1 Foinavon in 1967); the making of equine history (Red Rum's third win in 1977); the triumph of the human spirit (cancer victim Bob Champion's win on Aldaniti in 1981); the bumbling of officials (the false start fiasco of 1993); or even the intrusion of the real world, with the IRA bomb threat that forced an emergency evacuation of the course and postponement of the race in 1997. The Grand National is simply incapable of delivering an uneventful storyline.

Of the potential narratives in today's race at Aintree, there is one that dominates all others - a last victory for the race's most famous trainer, Jenny Pitman, as she edges towards the shadows of retirement at the end of May. It is not just Pitman's record in the race - she has already won it twice, with Corbiere in 1983 and Royal Athlete in 1995 - that makes her final attempt so noteworthy, but also her prominence in the nation's perception of the event. She has had at least one runner every year since 1981, and her on-screen chemistry with the BBC's Aintree anchorman, Des Lynam, has been more potent than any soap-opera pairing.

For amidst the rough swirl of the day - the Grand National is the most-watched and most gambled-on horse race of the year - Lynam provides an orderly calm, while Pitman not only senses the nation's emotional pulse, but can also deliver an accurate diagnosis. In the chaos of 1993's void race, and the fear and confusion of 1997's bomb warning, the 16 million television viewers at home and the millions more in betting shops found Pitman articulating their own frustrations and anger in the common currencies of plain language and flowing tears. Whether she likes it or not, Mrs Pitman has become the great race's Muse, and today will be granted life membership of the Grand National Club for her services to the race.

Such achievements and distinction must have seemed an impossible horizon to the young Jennifer Harvey as she grew up in the post-war years with six siblings on a small, run-down farm in the village of Hoby in Leicestershire. For while her accounts of this happy early life generate images of HE Bates's book *The Darling Buds of May*, with the farm filled by animals and Jenny riding ponies at the age of two, there was little aspiration to her life. She was expected simply to embrace farm or livery work and, in time, motherhood.

At the age of 15, Jenny joined a racing yard as a stable-lad, feeding and grooming horses and mucking out their boxes. Within four years, she had met and married the rising young jockey Richard Pitman and soon gave birth to two sons, Mark

and Paul. While Richard rode to some prominence on good horses such as Pendil and Lanzarote, Jenny was left to bring up the children.

The former amateur jockey Brough Scott, now a journalist and presenter, recalls the days when he "picked Richard up from their little house in Lambourn to go to the races, with Jenny left behind as a beleaguered, frustrated mother, and young Mark crawling around the kitchen floor". Scott says that he would have "offered odds of 1,000-1 at that time against Jenny Pitman becoming a media darling".

Ironically, it was the acrimonious break-up of her marriage to Richard after 10 years

LIFE STORY

Origins: Born 11 June 1946 as Jennifer Susan Harvey, one of seven children of a farming family in Hoby, Leicestershire.

Education: Left local school at 15 to become a stable-lad.

Vital statistics: Married jockey, later commentator, Richard Pitman, in 1965. Separated, 1975. Two children, Mark and Paul. Married David Stait, assistant trainer, 1997.

Career: Became a national hunt trainer in 1975, at Weathercock House Stables, Lambourn.

Grand National successes: Corbiere (1983), Royal Athlete (1995). This year, her last, running Nahthen Lad (pictured).

Other notable winners: Cheltenham Gold Cup: Borough Hill Lad (1984); Garrison Savannah (1991); Welsh National: Corbiere (1983); Borough Hill Lad (1983); Stearsby (1986); Scottish National: Willsford (1995). Irish National: Mudahim (1997).

She says: "Horses are more generous than humans, they give everything."



that eventually propelled Jenny into the long march to where she is today. Jump jockeys, perhaps because of the ever-present dangers in their sport, are mostly cavaliers when it comes to women or drink, and a high proportion of their marriages fail. So when Richard left Jenny and the children, she found salvation for the resulting trauma and depression in turning to what she knew best, the care of horses, and also - as a direct act of defiance - the professional training of them. By 1975, she had obtained a training licence, facing down what she thought was the "rudeness of the Jockey Club committee as they whis-

pered about my prospects across a long, polished table".

Through personal loans and an overdraft, Pitman acquired Weathercock House Stables in Lambourn, and began investing in the sort of horse-flesh for which she has become most renowned: big, burly, staying steeplechasers. Her major breakthrough arrived in 1983, when Corbiere - a horse with "a big arse like a carhorse" that she had found in a field - won the Grand National. The following year, another strapping chaser, Burrough Hill Lad, won her the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Garrison Savannah, now ridden by her son Mark, repeated this feat in 1991, and was only just overhauled on the run-in of that year's Grand National, a dramatic repeat of the fate that also befell Richard Pitman on Crisp in 1973.

By now, Jenny was a highly successful, self-driven trainer, but she had also developed a buccaneering style with those in the racing press whom she thought patronising or inaccurate. She'd threatened to castrate one writer for comments about Burrough Hill Lad and, as relationships deteriorated, the combative style continued with another hack being handed an inscribed toilet roll "for all the crap you've written about me". Jockeys and racing authorities suffered similar bursts of "Pitman's Backhand", literally so in the case of jockey Jamie Osborne.

Having been deemed to have "carved up" a Pitman runner in a hurdle race at Ayr, Osborne found himself being slapped in the face by an irate "Mrs P", the nickname by which she was now known. However, events in the 1992 Gold Cup gave many of her enemies a chance to retaliate. The Martin Pipe-trained Irish horse Carvill's Hill was a strong favourite for the race, but there was a view that his front-running style and bold jumping could be disrupted if another horse took him on up front. As soon as the race began, Pitman's 150-1 outsider Golden Freeze went alongside Carvill's Hill and matched him stride-for-stride, jump-for-jump until Carvill's Hill's jumping disintegrated.

The aftermath of the race proved to be deeply poisonous, with Pitman accused of having run Golden Freeze as a "spoiler", while she insisted he had run on his merits. There was a media feeding-frenzy, and eventually the Jockey Club held an enquiry. Though they exonerated Mrs Pitman of foul tactics, the relatively small racing community still traded bitter opinions, and Mrs Pitman even threatened to sue the BBC commentator Julian Wilson for his remarks. What was seen as her intimidatory behaviour provoked one press room wag to dub her "The Winnie Mandela of Racing".

And then came the 1993 Grand National which, even for those who had taken against Pitman, proved to be an occasion for sympathy rather than sourness. A disastrously botched start and the failure of a crude warning system, saw many of the



Jenny Pitman's success has seen her break through both class and gender barriers *Julian Herbert/AllSport*

Grand National field complete the two circuits of the race without realising that the race had already been rendered void. First past the post was Esha Ness, trained by Jenny Pitman, and her tears of frustration won the hearts of the nation in the face of what looked like upper-class bungling on a "Light Brigade" scale.

Two years later, Pitman's redemption was more than completed by the victory of the 12-year-old Royal Athlete, a fragile horse that she had somehow managed to coax back to fitness and full-confidence in a memorable feat of training. No wonder Pitman was now dubbed by the tabloids "The Queen of Aintree". She has, as a matter of record, also won the Irish, Welsh and Scottish Grand Nationals with her horses, a feat that marks her down as one of the greatest racehorse trainers ever.

Two obvious post-war themes seem self-evident in Jenny Pitman's rise to such prominence - the empowerment of women, and the breaking down of class barriers. She had, on her own admission, not much of an education, and those who know her say that she is suspicious of people who come across as "smart alecs". Similarly entrenched male attitudes are

often given short-shrift. One trainer who knows her well says that "she's not one for being impressed by titles or people with initials after their name; she just wants to deal with people who'll tell her the truth. At the centre, she's rock hard, but she's a rock in a velvet glove".

One such person has been her training assistant David Stait, whom she married two years ago after a 20-year relationship. Her decision to retire, announced with typically emotional timing on the first day of last month's Cheltenham Festival, may well be the result of a desire to enjoy the stability and fulfilment of marriage that was denied to her first time around. Pitman is also in remission from the thyroid cancer she announced last year at her award of the OBE at Buckingham Palace.

Even at a youthful 52, now may well be a good time to go. She has nothing to prove to the racing fraternity and has earned a genuine admiration, not just from those who bet, but also from a wider public for whom her epic struggle has its own resonance. Even Richard, her first husband, has graciously suggested that a victory today for her horse, Nahthen Lad, "would lift the roof off Aintree".

Touchingly, at Cheltenham, she signed off her retirement speech with an effective homily that disarmed those who felt she had upstaged the event. "I am not rich in terms of money, but in terms of all the memories I've had from racing. I have feelings that the richest person in the world couldn't buy. Win or lose today, there will be an inevitable torrent of tears on Des Lynam's shoulder as the "Queen of Aintree" makes her formal abdication. She has already assigned her stables to her son Mark, a highly promising trainer in his own right, but perhaps the public at Aintree will not let her go so easily.

For here is a race that is not, unlike The Gold Cup or The Derby, an elite brethren of horses fighting for superiority. The Grand National is a handicap, in which all the runners, no matter what their breeding or training, have a theoretical chance of success. The public understands and exalts the inherent democracy of such an enterprise, rejoicing in the populist sentiment and lasting fame it generates. In Jenny Pitman's life and career achievements, they undoubtedly see the same struggle enshrined in human terms.

STAN HEY

ACCIDENTAL HEROES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

35: CHRISTINE KEELER, CALL GIRL

ARGUABLY THE least enduring aspect of the so-called Profumo Affair was that it helped nail the coffin lid on 13 years of Conservative government. We've lived through other political cycles since then, and now more easily appreciate that these come and go in fairly predictable patterns. Scandal is a symptom of decline - not a cause.

John Profumo, Harold MacMillan's Minister of War, resigned in 1963 after lying to the House of Commons about his affair with "society girl" Christine Keeler. "Procured" for Lord Astor's Cliveden set by society osteopath Stephen Ward, the 17-year-old Keeler was first spotted by Profumo climbing naked out of the swimming pool as Profumo and his wife, the actress Valerie Hobson,

took an evening stroll. There is something almost classical in the encounter - like the Greek god Alpheus's first espial of a river nymph. This was a cautionary tale - but Profumo was presumably too enraptured to remember his Ovid.

It might have ended with Profumo's prompt resignation in 1963 had not the authorities decided to make a scapegoat of Stephen Ward. It was at Ward's trial for living off immoral earnings that Christine Keeler and her co-witness Mandy Rice-Davies came into their own.

There is no doubt that Rice-Davies, not Keeler, was the folk heroine of the trial. Her artless replies to cross-examination delighted the public, and her answer on being told that Lord Astor denied

having an affair with her - "Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?" - has passed into daily usage. Blonde and brunette, Keeler and Rice-Davies became inseparably linked, although Keeler, at the time and since, has publicly dissociated herself with the "call girl" Rice-Davies.

So what happened to elevate Keeler to the status of heroine? After all, life wasn't very generous to her after Profumo. A nine-month stretch

in Holloway for perjury and two divorces led to a poverty-stricken life in a public housing project by the time Joanne Whalley-Kilmer portrayed her in the 1969 film *Scandal*.

But the thing is, the film was principally about Keeler - not Rice-Davies, who was played in a lesser role by Bridget Fonda. Something had happened between 1963 and 1969 and that thing was a photograph. The famous shot of a naked

Christine Keeler astride a black plastic Anne Jacobsen chair - the chair's back keeping her decent - is often misattributed to David Bailey or Terence Donovan. It was in fact taken by the Hong Kong-born snapper Ewis Morley in an upstairs room at Peter Cook's Establishment Club in Soho during the summer of 1963.

The photograph was meant as a publicity still for a projected film about the Profumo affair. "She only agreed to strip after we cleared the room of all attendants and turned down the lights," remembers Morley. "I even offered to turn my back."

Keeler always claims she kept her pants on.

Morley remembers a wide-eyed, naive young woman - the exact opposite of everything that the photograph conveys. This became an instant icon of the emergent Swinging Sixties - defiance and liberation in one posture. Popsies as Pop Art. Fallen women were no longer brushed out of sight - they were a fashion statement.

The photograph's potency has endured - shorthand for modern, sexually independent women - and has been reconstructed in advertising campaigns as diverse as the Citroën Saxo and granary bread. Kylie copied it, Joe Orton satirised it, and the pose is a veritable cliché in men's style mags. Last year in Glasgow, the Spice Girls even recreated the pose on stage - giving Christine the ultimate accolade. The progenitor of Girl Power.



THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



A squirrel-quarrel on the bough -
They tumble off together now,
Victor and vanquished, down they go
Deep in a drift of hawthorn snow.

A district quakes. A kraken wakes
Of late, which takes to English lakes.
It's three feet long and goes for pikes.
The Midlands "alligator" strikes
This week at Sandwell Valley Park
While rangers languish in the dark.
"A salamander of some sort"
Is what the wildlife experts thought.
But since it's not the Black Lagoon
They hope to catch the creature soon,
As people at their water sport
Run certain risks until it's caught.

Long holidays? The teachers fight
Of course, and absolutely right.
They need that six weeks as a hedge
To stop them sliding off the edge.
The latest scheme's result-gear pay
And now some prat pops up to say
"Let's cut their summer holiday"
A coda for this roundelay.
Meanwhile Witchfinder Woodhead stalls:
A whole profession hopes he falls.
I use his word: the news may be
Quite "educative"? Possibly.

The Sun, I swear this is the truth,
Reprinted "Anthem for Doomed Youth"
And Wilfred Owen, pictured there
Beside the poem - his haunted stare.
They ran it huge - forget what page,
Your poet had fainted by that stage.

The time when we may tour the stars
Reported to be coming soon.
We'll book a weightless wedding day
Then honeymoon upon the moon.
It's slightly pricey as it goes,
At round about five hundred K;
Though men who spend that kind of loot
Might not be in a rush to stray.
A Space-Groom for an Astronette
By 2025, they think.
I wouldn't rush to place a bet
Before you check that rail-link.
The future's hardly ever late,
But trains? They're hard to estimate.

Birthday this week: Kofi Annan,
Who's sixty-one. Tough gig, top man.
Great product, peace. So hard to sell...
Kofi Annan, I wish you well.

DAYS LIKE THESE

10 APRIL 1980

PHILIP TOYNBEE,
writer, observes in his journal:

"I can remember only two occasions when my parents expressed open irritation with each other in front of me. Easy to say that the conventions of their class and period restrained them: easy to say that this suppression of their true feelings probably contributed to the final and deeply embittered bust-up. But how I respect them both for that surface dignity they maintained! What a gross fault it has been to suppose that restraint must be equated with suppression; that there is something honest, even admirable, about an immediate, public exhibition of angry feelings."

13 APRIL 1930

ISAK DINESSEN
(Karen Blixen), novelist, writes to her mother from Somalia:

"At long last Fathima had a little girl on Sunday. I was almost about to believe it was a false rumour. She is so delighted with the baby and is well. I think she is especially pleased that it is a girl. In the conditions of the Muhammadan world, where men and women are so far away from each other in work, interests and life in general, and really only come near each other when, as Goldschmidt says, they are 'either to dance or be united in wedlock' - and anyway I'm not at all sure that Somali men and women do dance much together - I think that the women gradually grow unable really to feel anything for the male sex - not even for their sons.

The men's whole world is too incomprehensible to them: I do not think they have any respect for it at all, except in so far as it provides food; but the real, actual and reasonable world is that of women, and with a little girl they feel they have something that is close to them and belongs to them, while a boy will sooner or later be drawn into the strange and irrelevant existence of men."

15 APRIL 1778

PARSON WOODFORDE
incumbent of Western Longeville, notes in his diary:

"We breakfasted, dined, supped and slept again at home. Brewed a vessel of strong Beer today. My two large Piggs, by drinking some Beer grounds taken out of one of the Barrels today, got so amazingly drunk by it, that they were not able to stand and appeared like dead things almost, and so remained all night from dinner time today. I never saw Piggs so drunk in my life."

IAN IRVINE

The only black candidate in Wales

THERE'S A feeling that Monmouth, a county of rolling hills, workaday farms and tidy market towns, is on a see-saw. Part of Wales, yes. But so close to the border that some pupils at local schools live in England, while people in Chepstow and Monmouth town commute to work in Gloucester and Bristol.

Like any no man's land, Monmouth has long been fought over - bloodily in days gone by and more recently by warring political parties. One of the crucial battles in next month's election to the National Assembly for Wales is being played there with added brio.

Cherry Short, the Labour standard bearer, is the only black or Asian candidate competing for one of the 40 first-past-the-post seats in the 60-member body: the only black candidate, indeed, with a chance in any of the elections in either Wales or Scotland. Two others in Wales, an Iraqi-born academic and a former black student leader, who came through the vetting procedure, are on the party lists for the other 20 "top up" seats, too low down to have a chance of winning.

A tall, handsome woman, Cherry Short is at ease pounding the pavements to press Labour's case. It's a long way from Jamaica, where she was born 46 years ago. But the Caribbean town of Manchester that she swapped for Wales in 1962, is not too unlike Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow, she says. Agriculture - sheep rather than sugar cane - is the link.

Ms Short has Welsh connections. "My father comes from Anglesey Quaker stock. He met my mother when he was living in the USA. I came to Wales at an early age and lived with friends and went to school here. I am decidedly not a one-issue politician."

In other words she is pure New Labour. The mother of sons aged 25 and 10 ("I have experienced the personal difficulties of combining a working life with that of being a mother"), she holds an MSc in women's studies and a BSc in social administration. A member of the Government's task force for the "Welfare to Work" and "New Deal" programmes in Wales, she sits on industrial tribunals and has been chair of the standing conference on race in Europe (Wales) for the past five years. She is married to Christo-

pher Short, the former chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Wales.

Monmouth is the birthplace of Henry V. A statue of the victor of Agincourt overlooks a square named after the victor of the 1415 battle in which Welsh longbow men demonstrated the awesome power of a weapon capable of delivering the 15th century equivalent of a cruise missile.

It has swung hither and thither since a parliamentary by-election in 1991 when Huw Edwards snatched the seat from the Tories. It reverted to blue in 1992. On 1 May 1997, Edwards was back with a majority of 4,178. That cushion is not sufficiently plump for Labour to feel complacent.

In the 1997 referendum Monmouth voted against devolution by 2-1. That makes the contenders' task all the harder. However as polling day approaches scepticism is tinged with a "let's make the best of it" attitude.

Howard Hancock, a third generation master butcher is blunt: "We didn't want an assembly. But now we have got one I expect I'll vote on 6 May. Who for? I'm still making up my mind." His shop promotes British, not Welsh, meat.

Monmouth's ethnic population is minute. Irma Fingal-Rock, born in Dominica 50 years ago, came to Wales in 1970. She runs a delicatessen with her partner Tom Innes and is enthusiastic: "It's wonderful to find a black woman candidate here."

Happiness is not uppermost in Bill Williams' mind. A party member for more than half a century, he is upset. "A lot of things about the Government worry me. Especially the war in Yugoslavia. But I'll still vote Labour next month," he says.

When she lived in Finchley, Wendy Vijendran voted for Margaret Thatcher. Now her home is in Penrhose, a hamlet buried in the countryside, and she has undergone a change of heart. "I must be the only person in my tiny community who voted for Glenys Kinnock in the European Elections and I'm going to vote Labour next month," she says.

In the spring sunshine, Monmouth wears a jaunty air. A statue of one of its famous sons, Charles Rolls, the co-founder of Rolls-Royce, looks down on the passing scene. Antique shops and a cavernous second-hand books emporium

WITNESS

WELSH ELECTION CAMPAIGN



Cherry Short: 'Wales has to recognise its diversity'

Andrew James

orium jostle with cafés, run-of-the-mill retailers and an upmarket jeweller.

Charity shops appear vaguely up-market. Estate agents, digesting the latest interest rate cut, have few properties on offer for less than £50,000 and a number at more than £250,000.

Country juxtaposes with town in the columns of the weekly *Monmouthshire Beacon* (established October 1837). Cesspit emptiers advertise for custom, and the front page carries a story trailing a meeting to discuss the low rate of salmon spawning on the Wye which is said to threaten the species' survival.

The sheer size of the constituency adds intrigue. The southern boundary touches the M4, with London less than two hours' drive away.

Thirty-odd miles north, a network of minor roads criss-cross between Wales and England. Only dyed-in-the-wool local drivers know whether they are in Herefordshire or the county of Monmouth. Three ancient fortifications - White Castle, Skenfrith Castle and Gromont Castle - dating from the 12th century dominate the terrain. The Normans knew a thing or two about defence in depth. They built the strong points in a strategic triangle so that any one under threat

could be supported by the others.

The assembly battle is a straight joust, not a triangular or quadrilateral contest. The head-to-head is between Ms Short and the Tory David Davies, who works for the family tea importing business and campaigned hard for a no vote in the referendum.

Nationalism is almost dead in Monmouth. Plaid Cymru was bottom of the poll two years ago, and in the 1991 election the party collected fewer votes than Screaming Lord Sutch. With only 1 in 50 speaking Welsh that is not surprising, but nationalists are quick to point out that in the north-west of Wales, where the ancient tongue is the first language of two-thirds of the people, Plaid is making waves.

Like her Westminster namesake, Clare, Ms Short speaks plainly: "Wales has to recognise its diversity. As well as black and Asian communities there are small but significant numbers of Italians who opened cafés in the valleys when coal mining was at its peak earlier this century. Spaniards fleeing from Franco settled here. Poles came to work in the pits and if you look hard enough there's an Irish flavour to Holyhead, a couple of hours from Dublin."

She says she has a dual mandate

and can represent both Monmouth and the wider mixed ethnic communities.

The area has its own diversities. Monmouth town mayor Maureen Roach wears her chain of office as proudly as she speaks of attractions that lure tourists by the thousand. All tastes she says are catered for - hang-gliding, angling, the castles, the 13th century bridge over the Monnow, the deer farm near Raglan where Desmond McElney's vineyard produces wine to complement the venison.

Food buffs, not to mention London-based restaurant critics, are spoilt for choice. The Walnut Tree, outside Abergavenny, rates highly across the world. The Black Bear, near Usk, and The Crown, at Whitebrook in the Wye Valley, are also among the top tastes.

But the next few weeks will provide food for thought rather than local dishes such as poached Usk salmon and Llanover salt duck. And behind the genteel image of an area that to the casual observer is just another bucolic heaven, something stirs. With Cherry Short on the campaign trail and a close fight in prospect, Monmouth is heading to become more than an everyday story of country folk.

TONY HEATH

THE WEASEL

In which Rick Stein causes me and Mrs W to have a domestic in the fishmonger's and I resort to thumbing through specialist magazines

ST RICK of Padstow has been the presiding deity for our fortnight on the North Yorkshire coast. Starting with Mr Stein's Grilled Lemon Sole with Lemon-grass Butter, we moved on to Maryland Crab Cakes with Tarragon Sauce, then came Hot Shellfish with Garlic and Lemon Juice (a classic) followed by Mild Potato Curry topped with Smoked Haddock and a Poached Egg. Even Mrs Weasel, not the world's greatest fish-lover, admitted the toothsome-ness of the piscine cuisine. However, she has her limits. Careless of the crowd in the fishmonger's, she exploded: "You are NOT buying those horrible rubbery things, NO!"

"Rick Stein says 'they can taste almost like lobster'."

"They're like off-cuts from a tyre factory. We're not having them."

"Are you two having a domestic?" inquired the lady behind the counter.

With that, I accepted defeat with good grace. I must admit that Mr Stein's tribute to the whelk, which appears in his first book *English Seafood Cookery* (published in 1988 when he was still "Richard Stein"), is heavily qualified: "The flavour is variable; sometimes they taste frightful... I can't say I am an enthusiast."

But his feelings for the humble gastropod seem to have warmed with the passing of the years. Rick Stein's *Taste of the Sea* (BBC, 1995) contains a recipe for Shark, Whelk and Octopus Salad. This yummy mélange is not quite the ringing endorsement that it sounds, since the dish only contains four whelks. However, in Rick Stein's *Fruits of the Sea* (BBC, 1997), my hero is more whole-hearted in his appreciation of the shellfish. "I've got a lot of time for whelks," he declares, before introducing his legion of fans to Whelk Frittlers. A few pages earlier, there is a dish called Chinese Whelks with Bean Sprouts and Button Mushrooms. "Thinly sliced and stirred into a Chinese stir-fry," Mr Stein insists, "whelks are incredibly good."

It was this that sent me scuttling back, alone this time, to the fishmonger. Though tempted by a £5.25 lobster ("I'm sorry it's so dear," said the saleswoman), I snapped up half a pound of freshly boiled whelks at £1.50. Admittedly, the price of Mr Stein's dish began to soar as I acquired the other ingredients - along with the mushrooms and bean sprouts, it required oyster sauce, soy sauce, dry sherry, pak-choi, root ginger and hot peppers - and I began to think regretfully of the lobster.

You can imagine what Mrs W said when I returned. But Mr Stein's "incredibly good" promise placated her at least temporarily. After slicing and stir-frying as directed, the result didn't look too bad, while the smell was positively tempting. Moreover, the taste was OK - with the exception of one intractable ingredient.

Even when pared into slivers, the whelks remained, well, whelks. A couple of minutes after taking her first mouthful, Mrs W morosely announced: "I'm still chewing." At my insistence, she chomped on and on ("Just like school dinners," complained my spouse). Nearing the bottom of her bowl, Mrs W put down her spoon. "I'm feeling a bit queasy," she

groaned. I was forced to concede that I was feeling not unqueasy myself.

Twenty-four hours later, the whelks were still making their presence felt. St Rick may have come to venerate the blighters, but as far as I'm concerned, these hardly British gastropods have crossed the cusp into inedibility. Maybe we should only eat toddlers, like the *bidols* you get in France. However, I learn from this week's *Fishing News* that "a new minimum size for whelks

hellsish cuisine to a heavenly high. Let's kick off with Chile Pepper magazine

("For those who like it hot!"), which, incidentally, reveals that "Britain's Queen Mother has a taste for the piquant". The QM is probably aching to get her mitts on the winners of this journal's 1999 Fiery Food Challenge. They include such agonising delicacies as "Hotter N' Hell", the winning hot salsa, and "Crying Tongue", the best hot sauce. "Peaches and Screams"

snatched first place among fruity hot sauces, while "Scorned Woman" cheese straws won the prize of top snack. "I Scream" sauce emerged as champion among fresh salsas, and a condiment dubbed "Nytrro" scorched its way to victory in the meat-sauce category.

For more placid types, the latest issue of *Pipes and Tobaccos* offers an expert appraisal of tinned baccy: Optimistically, the reviewer remarks of an aromatic blend called Blue Note: "Rather than getting the usual pariah treatment pipe-smokers receive, people will probably pay you to smoke this around them." However, he is unstrained in his disparagement of a mixture called Liberty: "It smells and tastes like floral soap - this sooty little blend does not resemble anything that should be smoked in a pipe." But he is utterly seduced by London Blend No 1,000: "I sat with my nose in the tin before even lighting up... rich, opulent and intoxicating."

I'd venture that even this blissful baccy is not as intoxicating as the



winners of the 11th Annual Cannabis Cup sponsored by the venerable journal *High Times* ("the most notorious magazine in the world"). Held in the Netherlands, this heady occasion was attended by 1,500 potheads who assayed 40 different strains of marijuana. In such circles, you might think it would be difficult to detect the subtleties which denote excellence. One judge explained: "You smoke until you get high, then you smoke a different sample, and if it gets you higher than the first one, you put that brand at number one until another strain gets you even higher." As a result of such judicious assessment, a potent shrub called Super Silver Haze was declared the victor. Just don't confuse it with your ready-rubbed.

HAVE YOU noticed the changing fashions in motoring techniques? For example, overtaking on the inside has suddenly become accepted practice on our motorways. Of course, driving while engaged in an animated chinwag on the mobile has been a commonplace for some time now, but recently I have spotted certain individuals displaying their manipulative ingenuity by simultaneously steering, phoning and smoking. But the most surprising development is the unexpected popularity of U-turns. Why this manoeuvre should become the latest trend is a mystery. Obviously, the tactic is performed by Jack-the-lads for whom every minute counts. However, the need to do a U-turn suggests that they were driving the wrong way in the first place, perhaps being distracted by fiddling with mobiles, cigarettes, boom-boxes...



Amanda Berry

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

The bewildering pleasure of looking at paintings



SIRI HUSTVEDT
I have never loved a painting I can master completely. My love requires a sense that something has escaped me

When I was 19, I saw Giorgione's *The Tempest* for the first time, not the painting itself but a slide projection of it on a wall in an art history course. I had never heard of the artist and knew little about Italian Renaissance painting, but for some reason the picture caused a physical response in me – a genuine tremor of amazement. I fell in love with it then and there, in those 40 seconds before the professor clicked to the next slide. But why? What happened to me? I am not alone in feeling an almost electrical connection to a painting. I know any number of people who travel great distances to see a picture they have longed to see, who stand before a flat rectangular canvas covered with paint and have what they deem "an important experience".

The Tempest is a small picture of three people in a landscape, painted in 1503 or 1504. A man with a staff stands in the foreground, looking towards a woman who is seated on a hillside nursing an infant. A stream runs between them. She is naked except for a white cloth, which is draped over her shoulders and is spread out underneath her where she sits on the ground. Some curious ruins and a deserted city lie behind the figures. Above them is blue-green sky with a frail stroke of lightning and a clouded moon. Nobody knows what the painting is about.

Marcantonio Michiel, a Venetian nobleman and antiquary, kept a notebook between 1525 and 1543 in which he refers to the picture as Giorgione's rendering of a soldier and a gypsy. In the 18th century, the painting was called *The Family of Giorgione*, out of a mistaken idea that it depicted the artist, his wife and child. (The latter two never existed.) Salvatore Settis, an Italian art historian whose book on *The Tempest* was first published in 1978 and appeared in English translation in 1990, argues that the painting is a veiled account of the Eden myth, that these two people are Adam and Eve and that there's a snake in the picture. No one has ever seen this snake but Settis.

A more convincing argument, detailed by Jaymie Anderson in her monograph *Giorgione* (1997), is that the canvas is a pictorial version of the *Hyperboreia* of Poliphilo, a romance about Poliphilo, who in his search for antiquity comes across Venus feeding Cupid, but that's only a guess. There are also scholars who believe the painting is about nothing, that it's an example of a free-form fantasy.

Between my first viewing of the slide and a visit to the Accademia in Venice, where I saw the real painting for the first time four years later, I made a startling discovery. The image I carried in my mind was very accurate, with one exception: I left out the man. My memory of the painting was of the woman, the child, the landscape, the ruins, the city, the sky, the lightning – but no man. I gave this extraordinary gift to the heroine of my first novel, *The Blindfold*, who also remembers the canvas perfectly but has no memory of the fellow in the foreground. My obliteration of this man is a commentary on the painting, on me, and on the odd business of looking at paintings.

Every painting is still. It doesn't move. It is usually some kind of rectangle which mimics the architecture of a window. Its existence implies a spectator, just as a book implies a reader or a piece of music implies a listener. It is a dead thing animated by the presence of a living person who enters into some kind of relation with it. Not long ago, a woman wrote a letter to The



Giorgione's 'The Tempest': The female figure's eyes draw one into the canvas

New York Times in which she cited her experience when she saw Michelangelo's *David* in Florence. She wrote: "What a thrill it was to stand there and soak in its beauty and power. But how long I had to wait in the gallery for things to quiet down so that I could concentrate on it."

Two things interest me about her statement. First, that she experiences *David* as if it were active and she were passive – she "soaks" in the statue – and second, that she needs quiet for this saturation to take place. Her view of looking at the statue is a common one. The stone *David* radiates something in her direction and she prefers to have no distractions during those emanations. We rarely experience other inanimate things in this way. Think of a fork, for example, or a chair. Art is made to be seen. It is activated both by a cultural mythos that has decided religious undertones and by a real, even transforming, relation between the viewer and the thing viewed.

I have looked closely at *The Tempest* in the Accademia only three times. Each time is a repetition of my first rapture before that projected image in the classroom. I now know there is a man in the picture and that he serves as the vehicle of my entry into an image I don't fully understand, but understand enough to be fascinated. The staff he holds suggests that he is on a journey, that he has been walking. Now in repose, he looks over at the undressed woman calmly nursing her baby in a storm. He looks at her, but she is not looking back at him. She gazes outward toward the viewer, as though she has just lifted her eyes in the knowledge that somebody is spying on her.

By recognising me, the spectator, her eyes draw me into the space of the canvas, where I imaginatively become the man's double. In a painting, everything oc-

curs simultaneously, and I find myself trapped in this triangular seduction of looking – the direction of her gaze at me, coupled with the direction of his at her, what triggered my amnesia of him, the wandering male spectator. I forgot him because I was him.

The man and I occupy a similar space, because neither he nor I will ever get across the stream to speak to that woman or touch her. Nearly every analysis of the painting I have read acknowledges the insurmountable chasm between the figures. The stream separates them as it recedes backwards into the landscape. There is a bridge, however. Our hero wouldn't have to wade or swim through that stream. He could use the bridge, but he never will.

Why? Although the two figures are not very far apart, they appear to exist in separate realms. For one thing, he is dressed in contemporary clothing. Anderson suggests that this identifies him as a member of the Confraternity of the Sock, a group of young, unmarried noblemen who were engaged in amateur theatre productions. The woman, however, is nude, a signification of timelessness in that enchanted landscape, where a curious bit of wall is topped by two cylinders and where classical buildings coexist with houses that resemble those in rural areas outside Venice.

The woman's face is illuminated by a light from a mysterious source. Every one of her features is perfectly visible, while the young man's face is shadowed. The rest of him is easier to make out. He is obviously young and his jaunty pose and elegant clothing exude confidence. His body is fully inside the frame of the picture, but not by much. He seems to have just stepped in from another world.

The Tempest's ambiguity has baffled its viewers for hundreds of years because it

defies pre-existing codes for understanding paintings of the period. We are always reading art through known codes and precedents, even when those codes are unconscious. Nothing can take place between viewer and image without them. Most people have had the experience of seeing a work of art that is simply unintelligible to them. It doesn't mean that the work can't be comprehended. It means that the viewer's entry is blocked by a lack of orientation. The image can't come into view because it defies expectation, and expectation determines to an enormous degree what we actually see.

I remember walking into a large hotel lobby of some architectural complexity and looking down a corridor at a person standing at its far end. I didn't recognise the person for a couple of seconds, and then, with a sudden shock, I realised that I was looking at a reflected image of myself. I needed to know that the wall was a mirror before I could see myself in it.

Very good and very bad paintings are often confused. A very good work may defy codes to a degree that renders it not only nonsensical but irritating, and because of this viewers pronounce it bad. Innumerable despised works have gone on to command prices at the art market that take one's breath away. And yet, although sophistication in a viewer may help orient him, it may also bar understanding. After all, those who have been most spectacularly wrong about works of art were usually people who wrote about art for a living. Rigid expectation is blinding.

The Tempest is a painting that seems to wriggle out of the best-laid art-historical interpretations, but just because we can't name the characters in the painting or place them inside a known narrative doesn't mean that the work defies recognition or that it's meaningless.

If the painting is an allegory, it was probably, as Settis argues, an intentionally obscure one, a secret known to the painter, his young patron and perhaps a few other cognoscenti. *The Tempest* was owned privately, and it once had a painted cover which could be opened like a cabinet. Only then was the underlying image exposed. This method of looking at a painting is a seduction in itself. The spectator is allowed to open the door and peep inside, and what is he met with when the image is revealed but more voyeurism, a game of glances in an imaginary place?

Bewildered, he is drawn into the mysterious otherness of the nude woman, who has caught his eye, who appears to see him, but her body is turned in the direction of that young stranger in the foreground, who is also looking at her. Furthermore, she is not alone. She has a child at her breast, a fact which distances her further from the two spectators – one outside and one inside the painting. The lovely woman is not a reclining odalisque. Her erotic presence is defined by the fact that in this moment of nursing motherhood she is more unattainable than if she had no child beside her.

The drama of looking depicted in *The Tempest* is a reflective one. I, as spectator, am made conscious of my status as voyeur, which in turn binds me to the fellow in the foreground. His presence destabilises my position as someone securely outside the canvas, and the teetering effect it has on me creates an awareness of painting as the illusory projection of an artist. Whenever we look at a painting, we occupy the position once held by the painter who has now disappeared – that hidden body or ghostly presence behind every canvas. Even self-portraiture has this effect – the image which remains of a living face and body, now immobilised in paint.

Giorgione's picture coaxes us into a scene which announces itself as a dream or an inner vision. Just as when we examine the backgrounds in a Leonardo painting we know we are looking at an emotional landscape, we know that the countryside of *The Tempest* is not a representation of a real place. The weather is bad, but nobody seems to notice. If there is a wind, the trees are not much disturbed by it. We have stepped into the mirroring realm of the imaginary. If Anderson is right, and the young man with the shadowed face is wearing the colours of a group of young patrician players, what could be more appropriate to this painting than an allusion to theatre and to art, a world that enchants us through our eyes? In that case, the youth would become a human image of artifice, which by extrapolation would announce the presence of the painter himself.

Giorgione died when he was only 32 years old. Legend has it that he caught the plague from his mistress. He was always young. And it seems to me that the young man in the foreground doesn't look different from the self-portrait Giorgione did of himself as David. It's just a thought. The features of the wanderer are perhaps too blurry to be identified with any certainty. But even if, by some miracle, a scholar discovered a letter written by Giorgione, in which he explained all the references in this strange canvas, it would not solve the painting. One can't understand an image by placing a narrative beside it.

I do know that I have never loved a painting I can master completely. My love requires a sense that something has escaped me. This quality of cryptic excess may be responsible for the language people use to talk about seeing art as if an inanimate thing were endowed with an elusive, almost sacred power. In a culture flooded by facile images that race past us on a screen, peek out at us from magazines or loom over us in a city street – pictures so heavily coded, so easily read that they ask nothing of us but our money – looking long and hard at a painting may allow us entry into the enigma of seeing itself, because we must struggle to make sense of the image in front of us. *The Tempest* resides in room 10 in the Accademia in Venice. I think it will always resist my complete understanding, and that is why I will go back to look at it.

Siri Hustvedt's latest book is *Yonder: Essays*, published in the US by Henry Holt

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY



Remember?

Tartan trews at half-mast? Feathery hairdos? "Bye-Bye Baby"? The original boy band is back.

The Bay City Rollers are getting together again and hope to cut a new album (as they used to say in those far away-days of Rollermania). Considering the astonishing current enthusiasm for other 1970s groups like Abba, and, yes, even Mud, it was always unfair that the Rollers became the band that never was, forgotten, an embarrassment, just airbrushed out of history. Even the Wombles got a bigger slice of the retro-action. But the Rollers' tunes were just as melodic as Bjorn and Benny's and their lyrics well up to Mud's standards. "And we sang shang-a-lang and we ran with the band and sang do-wop-be doobie-do-aye." Sorry, got carried away, there.

Anyhow, having spent 20 years not speaking to each other, Alan, Woody, Eric and Les are putting matters right. Les (McKeown, lead singer) explained that "we wasted a lot of time being angry with each other". How true, Les, how true. "You've got to give a little love, take a little love, be prepared to forsake a little love 'til the sun comes shining through". Remember?

Natural prawn killer

Despite its size (about a foot long), and a 200-million year history dating back to the Jurassic Age, the mantis prawn has only just been discovered at the bottom of Sydney harbour.

It is interesting to scientists because it can strike at its fish prey in five milliseconds and has the most complex vision of any invertebrate. "If it were the size of a shark it would be the most fearsome creature in the sea," as the biologists put it.

It is interesting to Australia's barbecuing community because it tastes good. Eat with care.

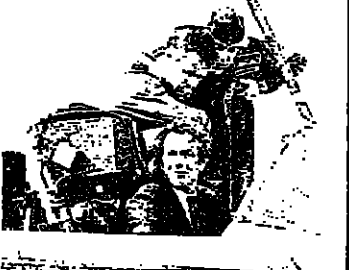
Monotreme sensation

Another exciting antipodean throwback. A duck-billed platypus has been born in captivity for the first time since 1944.

History, at the Healesville Sanctuary in Melbourne. The event has been described as the zoological equivalent of reaching the peak of Mount Everest. The platypus (an egg-laying mammal or monotreme) is, like the mantis prawn, another of evolution's great survivors. But big prawn, tough as they may be, had better watch out. They are a favourite food of the platypus, which catches them using electro-receptors on its bill. Truly a primeval struggle.

Image of the Week

"And what happens if I press this button?" Never let a control freak loose in a Tornado fighter.



MY WEEK

AMANDA BERRY,
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OF BAFTA



Busy, busy: Amanda Berry

Monday

We are staging the 51st British Academy Awards on Sunday and as it is only six days away, we are all working flat out. It's a bank holiday for most of the country but I go to the office. Working on a bank holiday is bliss, the phones don't ring and for the first time in weeks there is a sense of calm in the office. But the dry cleaners is shut!

I ring my mum to wish her a happy birthday. She is going to be my guest at the awards so we have a long conversation about frocks, when she is going to arrive and who will be sitting at our table. By 6pm I can see the colour of my desk and my in-tray is only half full. I get home by 8.30 (a rare treat), catch up on last week's newspapers and lose myself in *Nancharrow* on ITV.

Tuesday

An interview I did last week appears in *The Express* and I get lots of calls from friends who realise how hard I have been working and why I haven't been in touch. Diane (my assistant) and I have the final production meeting with Peter Estall and his team at the BBC, who are televising the awards. I am able to confirm that Gwyneth Paltrow is definitely coming, with her parents, which is wonderful news.

I chair a production meeting for 50 people at the Business Design Centre in Islington, north London, our venue for the awards, to discuss all the arrangements. The build-up for the event has started and suddenly it all seems terribly real. I go back to the office to make the final arrangements for Elizabeth Taylor's

Wednesday

Roberto Benigni has confirmed he will attend the ceremony which is terrific news. I spend the morning clearing paperwork and finalising table plans – that is, until they

change again. I rush out at lunchtime to have my legs waxed – the things a girl has to do. I get a message to say that Elizabeth Taylor has arrived in London which means all our plans worked. My in-tray is overflowing but I take a few minutes to reply to e-mails from friends who want to know how everything is going. As my situation is desperate, I beg them to send me some chocolate. I don't manage to leave the office until 11.30pm, by which time I have missed *Film 99*

Thursday

I finally remember to pick up my dry cleaning. I attend an early meeting at the Dorchester to discuss the press conference for Elizabeth Taylor. I then go up to the Business Design Centre which is really starting to take shape now, the ceiling has been blacked out with star cloth, and the huge gazons on which we are going to project archive film clips are now in place.

I spend the afternoon signing off press releases. It is terrific to be able to sign off a release announcing that stars like Michael Caine, Pierce Brosnan, Richard E Grant, Cate Blanchett, Jane Horrocks and Gwyneth Paltrow will all be attend-

ing. A huge Jiffy bag full of chocolate arrives from my friends.

Friday

I receive a copy of the BBC script, which I can't wait to read. I grab a cab to go over to the Dorchester for the Elizabeth Taylor press conference – it is absolutely packed. Then I go to the Business Design Centre where they are doing a piece about final preparations for the evening news. The venue looks amazing. I then go back to the Academy for a dinner hosted by Kodak in honour of the nominees in the cinematography and editing categories. After the dinner I go back to the office for a while and finally fall into bed in the early hours of Saturday morning.

INTERVIEW BY
AOIFE O'RIORDAN

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He fell ill at the end of the war, and was sent to a station in his own car. In Nottinghamshire, he was ended by a brief but violent attack before returning to RAF as Deputy Director of Transport Operations. He was Air Minister in the Ministry of Transport from 1945 to 1946. The event of an emergency British government in Berlin, between the Allies and the city was besieged. The three air corridors, it was clear that the whole was going to be required. British government and the city were not to be taken. By July the shortage of food and fuel had begun to be felt. The army had been involved in the airfields in Britain, and a few weeks there was a movement in Berlin, some 10 seconds.

From early on, he had been actively the leading staff of the Air Ministry, responsible for the maintenance of the fleet. He had been heavily involved in the war, and had been a member of the Air Ministry, responsible for the maintenance of the fleet. He had been heavily involved in the war, and had been a member of the Air Ministry, responsible for the maintenance of the fleet.



Raymond 'Freaky Tah' Rodgers, rapper and songwriter, born New York 1972; died New York 29 March 1999.

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Freaky Tah



Freaky Tah, a.k.a. Raymond Rodgers (far left), with the Lost Boys

RAP MUSIC'S Tarantino-style tendency to glamorise violence shows no sign of abating. In this unsavoury climate, which sees major record labels exploiting street culture without thinking through the consequences, the fatal shooting of Freaky Tah (a.k.a. Raymond Rodgers), a member of the US rap act Lost Boys, seems to be just another name to add to the sad litany of Tupac Shakur, killed in 1996. Notorious B.I.G., shot in 1997, and the cult rapper Big L (hugely respected in the underground for his tracks "Ebonics" and "Devil's Son"), who was gunned down in February this year.

Yet, until recently, Freaky Tah and the three other members of Lost Boys looked as if they had managed to escape their origins in the South Jamaica area of Queens, New York, with the success of two gold albums. However, the group didn't bail out of their community and supported local businesses as well as helping kids from their own neighbourhood.

Freaky Tah, along with his friend T. Kelly, who took up the nom de rap Mr Cheeks and cousins who became Pretty Lou and D.J. Spigg Nice, had seen the other side. "We've got family values," stated Freaky Tah in interviews. "We've played together when we were little and I hope to be buried beside these cats."

Raymond Rodgers was born in 1972. After attending high school, with the three other members of the group he began working at Kennedy Airport, but all four decided to quit on the same day. The quartet took their name from Joel Schumacher's 1987 film, the teen blockbuster *The Lost Boys*, and struggled to find a recording deal. Mr Cheeks penned some rhymes for the hip-hop pioneers Whodini (of "Magic Wand" fame) and gangsta rapper Father MC.

The Lost Boys openly admitted that in the early Nineties, they hustled and sold drugs to make ends meet. However, after seeing another dealer get shot, they decided to go straight, just as they signed to the Universal label in 1995.

By then, rap had gone mainstream, worldwide and ballistic, and several singles, "Jeeps", "Lex Coup", "Bimaz & Benz", "Renee", "Lifestyles of the Rich and Shameless" - with its mantra "some died wit the name, some die nameless, it's all the same game, it's all the same pain" - and "Music Makes Me High" (complete with a mindblowing remix featuring Tha Dogg Pound) as well as the infectious "Get Up", helped establish the Lost Boys on

the hip-hop scene. However, the release of their debut album, *Legal Drug Money*, which reflected on their transition from a ghetto existence, was delayed until 1998 and, even though the record went gold, the outfit didn't quite emulate the cross-over success of Jay-Z, Busta Rhymes or Bone Thugs 'N' Harmony.

Love Peace & Nappiness (1997) an uplifting and more mature follow-up, saw Lost Boys widen their horizons and function in a more democratic manner, with Tah penning "Get Your Hustle On" and "Why?", two of the album's pivotal tracks. According to

Pretty Lou, "Cheeks and Freaky were the star players on the team. I was like the amp-man, making the crowd throw their hands up while Spigg kept the music going and did some background vocals."

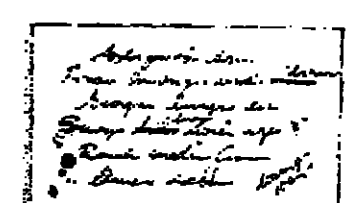
Featuring guest appearances by upcoming rap stars like Redman and Canibus and the obligatory homage to Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, *Love Peace & Nappiness* sold more than 500,000 copies. The Lost Boys, who pledged allegiance to their background in "My Crew", formed their own production company called LB Family Entertainment and were hoping to issue

a compilation featuring some of the finest undiscovered talent from Queens. Freaky Tah's father, Linford Rodgers, said of his son's work: "His dream was to help other kids in the neighbourhood get started in the business. He was an open-hearted person, always willing to help those who were in need."

A third album by the group, provisionally entitled *LB For Life*, was due for release in June.

PIERRE PERRONE

Raymond "Freaky Tah" Rodgers, rapper and songwriter, born New York 1972; died New York 29 March 1999.



LITERARY NOTES ALISON JOSEPH

A nun in a dodgy bar at three in the morning

WHILE Musing on the idea of what would make a good detective for a series of crime novels, I stumbled upon the idea of a nun. Which shows how little I, and many others, know about nuns.

What I did know was that the archetypal hero of crime fiction should be in some sense set apart, a loner, capable of fetching up in dodgy bars at three in the morning, drinking whisky with no one back at home to worry about them. He or she should be beyond society, thereby free to go down the mean streets.

A nun according to common prejudice is someone who lives by solitude, who has set herself apart from family and society, and who, if she lives in an open order, could quite feasibly be accountable to no one. After all, these days, a nun is as likely to be dressed in jeans and live in a terrace house in Hackney, as to be covered in black from head to toe and inhabit a medieval cloister in a place of outstanding natural beauty. Modern nuns can be found in hostels for alcoholics, in centres for the homeless; freed, indeed, by their vows, to go down those mean streets.

But many fail to realise that a convent is a social structure like any other. Far from escaping from any kind of accountability, those living the monastic life are still in a workplace facing the same workplace issues as anyone else. Nuns progress from their novitiate to manage-

ment posts, rising up in their organisation like any other managerial person, and then finding themselves responsible for the running of things, the planning of building works, the worrying about funding and expenditure.

Rather than floating through the silent cloister on a cloud of unknowing, the modern nun is constantly called upon to deal with the everyday running of her community, or with the challenges of her work. Not only that, but there are the irritations of one's fellow workers to contend with - just like ordinary life, in fact, except without weekends off.

So much for the archetypal solitary nun. It would hardly be appropriate to be out chasing clues, when you're supposed to be doing the washing-up, or in a management meeting with the archdeacon to discuss the new roof. A convent, rather than being a collection of people seeking solitude, is more like a beehive, a collective body of interdependence and consensus.

There is, however, another side to the archetype: the sense of struggle. In any crime novel, of course, there is the conflict between good and evil; but also, there is the series of challenges faced by the hero in uncovering the truth. In classic crime novels from the so-called "golden age", the detective simply finds him or herself up against the evidence, and has to fight

with that. But, these days, we ask more of our crime fiction: the modern detective has his or her own personal battles to be fought - this could take the form of conflict within their personal life, a messy divorce perhaps or some past unresolved relationship which won't quite disappear. And, of course, joining a convent doesn't put an end to any of that. Entering a monastic community doesn't wipe out one's past. It doesn't cancel those all too human yearnings, desires or memories - but it might just offer a structure in which such issues can be contained or laid to rest.

Someone who takes up the monastic life may have relinquished the "outside world" in terms of family, mortgages or car insurance; but instead they face the challenges raised by their vows. Far from having run away, they have chosen to accept things as they are, to inhabit a place from where there is nowhere left to run. A convent is a place to live out one's real life, like anywhere else.

A nun, then. A fictional nun, someone who finds herself out chasing clues when she's supposed to be doing the washing-up. And she's still capable of fetching up in dodgy bars at three in the morning drinking far too much whisky. It could work.

Alison Joseph is the author of *The Dying Light* (Headline, £17.99)

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

MEMORIAL SERVICES

BAMBERGHOE: A Memorial Service for John Renford Bamberg, Fellow of St John's College, sometime Tutor, Dean and President, formerly University Lecturer in Philosophy, will be held in St John's College Chapel on Saturday 24 April 1999 at 12 noon.

IN MEMORIAM

ABU-HAKIMA: Ahmad Mustafa, Professor, scholar, historian and world authority on Eastern Arabia. Born 28 August 1923 in Al-Basra, Iraq. Died 9 April 1998 in Ottawa, Canada. A truly contented man, wherever he travelled he brought optimism and love to the lives of many people around the world. Always remembered in our hearts, thoughts and prayers. Family and friends.

Announcements for Gazette Births, Marriages & Deaths, Deaths, Memorial Services, Wedding Announcements, in memoriam are charged at £5.50 a line (AT extn).

APPOINTMENTS

Dr Peter January, to be ambassador to the Republic of Albania.
Mr Peter Harborne, to be British High Commissioner to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
Mr Timothy John Bowles, to be a Master of the Supreme Court, Chancery Division.
Mr Creon Butler, to be Chief Economist and Head of the Economic Relations Department at the Foreign Office.
Mr Guy Nicholas Otten, to be part-time Regional Chairman of the Mental Health Review Tribunals for the Trent and Northern and Yorkshire Region.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Lyndon Brook, actor, 73; Lord Brookes, former company chairman, 90; Professor J. Desmond Clark, anthropologist and archaeologist, 83; Sir Anthony Cleaver, chairman, AEA Technology, 61; Sir Edward Evans-Lombe, High Court judge, 62; Mr Lennox Fyfe, chairman, Co-operative Wholesale Society, 58; Mr Patrick Garland, theatre and film director, 64; Miss Lesley Garrett, soprano, 44; Mr Adrian Henri, former president, Liverpool Academy of Arts, 67; Mr John Holroyd, Secretary for Appointments to the Prime Minister, 64; Miss Gloria Hunniford, radio presenter, 59; Mr Owen Kelly, former Commissioner of Police for the City of London, 67; Mr Tom Levitt MP, 45; Professor Kathleen Major, former Principal, St Hilda's College, Oxford, 93; Mr Stan Mellor, racehorse trainer and former jockey, 62; Mr David Moorcroft, athlete, 46; Sir Robert Rhodes James, historian and former MP, 66; Mr Omar Sharif, actor, 67; Mr Thomas Spencer, MEP, 51; Mr Christopher Stoddart, managing director, GMTV, 49; Mr Paul Theroux, writer, 58; Mr Max von Sydow, actor, 70; Sir Rodney Walker, former chairman, Sports Council, 56.

ANNIVERSARIES

TODAY: Births: James V. King of Scotland, 1512; John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, poet and courtier, 1647; William Hazlitt, essayist and critic, 1778; William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, 1819; Joseph Pulitzer, newspaper proprietor and founder of the Pulitzer Prizes, 1847; George Arliss (George Augustus Andrews), actor, 1868. Deaths: Agostino Agazzari, composer, 1640; Algernon Charles Swinburne, poet, 1909; Khalil Gibran, writer, 1931; Evelyn Arthur St John Waugh, novelist, 1966; Antonia White, journalist and novelist, 1980. On this day: The United States patent system was established, 1790; the Catholic Emancipation Bill

was passed by Parliament, 1829; the New York Tribune (later Herald-Tribune) was first published, 1841; George Eliot's novel *The Mill on the Floss* was published, 1860; Phineas T. Barnum's circus first opened, Brooklyn, New York, 1871; the US Senate passed the Civil Rights Bill, 1960; over 3,000 people were killed after severe earthquakes occurred in Iran, 1972; Golda Meir resigned as Prime Minister of Israel, 1974; the first London performance of the musical show *Chicago* was staged, 1979. Today is the Feast Day of St Bademus, St Fulbert of Chartres, St Macarius or Macaire of Ghent, St Michael de Sanctis, St Paternus of Abdinghof and the Martyrs under the Danes.

TOMORROW: Births: Marguerite d'Angoulême, Queen of Navarre, 1492; James Parkinson, physician and paleontologist, discoverer of Parkinson's Disease, 1755; George Canning, statesman, 1770; Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, soldier and orientalist, 1810; Sir Charles Halle (Carl Halle), pianist and conductor, 1819; Dean Gooderham Acheson, lawyer and statesman, 1893. Deaths: Ljwelyn ap Iorwerth, Prince of Wales, 1240; Donato Bramante (d'Agno), architect, 1514; Sir Thomas Wyatt, conspirator, executed 1554; Antoine Coypel, painter, 1661; John Galt, novelist, 1839; James Anthony Bailey, circus proprietor, 1906; Erskine Caldwell, novelist, 1987. On this day: Sir Thomas Fairfax was victorious at the Battle of Sedgely during the English

Civil War, 1644; William III and Mary II were crowned joint monarchs, 1689; George Bernard Shaw's play *Pym* opened in London, 1914; the US spacecraft Apollo 13 blasted off from Cape Kennedy, 1970. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Barsanuphius, St Gemma Galgani, St Godeberta, St Guthlac, St Isaac of Spoleto and St Stanislaus of Cracow.

LECTURES

TODAY: National Gallery: Tom Parsons, "Feasts (ii): Giordano, Perseus turning Phineas and his Followers to Stone", 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Julian Litten, "The Easter Story in Late Medieval Art", 2pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Soft Sculpture", 1pm. British Museum: Paul Collins, "The Revival of Assyria", 11.30am; "Gods and Kings in the Ancient Near East", 1.30pm. National Portrait Gallery: Anne Harvey and Philip Baguley, "Harlequin in Whitehall: the life and work of Humbert Wolfe (1886-1940). poet and civil servant", 3pm.

TOMORROW: Victoria and Albert Museum: Alex Buck, "The Arts and Crafts Legacy: from 1860s to the present", 2pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Subject Specialists in Art", 2.30pm. National Portrait Gallery: Paul Webb, "Crime Writers: P. D. James", 3pm.

Arms trade a sign of global moral drift

NEXT WEEK sees the 300th anniversary of the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi when Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the 10 Sikh Gurus, created a new community of equals dedicated to the worship of God through service to their fellow human beings. It is an appropriate coincidence that Vaisakhi falls close to the Christian festival of Easter. Both have their roots in the brave martyrdom of a religious leader and the human frailty of those that follow. The story of Peter's denial at the time of Jesus Christ's crucifixion is mirrored in the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Guru of the Sikhs. The Guru was publicly beheaded for defending the rights of Hindus facing persecution and forced conversion to Islam at the hands of the Mughal rulers. His courageous stand was later echoed in Voltaire's sentiment: "I may not believe in what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it."

The Mughal Emperor challenged the Guru's followers, who then had no recognisable appearance, to come forward and claim their master's body. But Sikhs in the crowd hesitated to do so and the body was eventually removed by stealth.

The Guru's son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, was concerned about this momentary lapse of courage. He constantly reminded Sikhs of the need to stand up for their beliefs however great the odds. Then he decided to put the community to the test. On the spring festival of Vaisakhi 1699, as crowds were celebrating the gathering of the winter harvest, the Guru suddenly emerged from a tent, sword in hand, and asked for any Sikh willing to give his life for his faith, to join him in the tent. Without hesitation, five Sikhs instantly responded to the challenge.

In a simple ceremony in which sweetened water, called *Amrit*, was sprinkled on the five, the Guru initiated the "five beloved" as the first members of a new community of equals who were to combine steely resolve with saintliness of temperament. They were required neither to intimidate nor be intimidated by others. To com-

plete the ceremony, the Guru gave the first five members of the Khalsa, the community of equals, the symbols or visible identity - including the long hair covered by a turban - by which we are recognised today. Finally he asked the five to drop any name linked to caste and take the common name "Singh" - literally "lion" - as a reminder of the need for courage. In the same way, women were asked to take the common name "Kaur" - literally "princess" - as a reminder of dignity and complete equality.

Sikhs, then, like members of the Salvation Army with their guide to responsible living. In ditching such guidance, we have made up our own, putting "I" or "me" or "us" rather than God at the centre of the scheme of things - expediency with disastrous consequences measured in the rise of crime, family breakdown and our attitude to others, both near and far.

Today we are all numbed by the suffering in Kosovo, Rwanda and many other parts of world, but we need to ask ourselves how much this is due to a globalisation of moral drift, where arms exports and political support to known tyrants are considered fine, as by the French in Rwanda or ourselves to Saddam Hussein in the Eighties - until something goes wrong. Even today, Slobodan Milosevic is asking his neighbour Russia for more arms.

Sikh teachings on the use of force are clear. When all other means of combating evil fail, it is permissible to turn to the use of force. *Nato must finish what it has started.* But moral questions persist. Why the use of force against Saddam Hussein and Serbia and the turning of a blind eye to the dozen or so other regimes carrying out unspeakable atrocities on their fellow citizens?

When the United Nations organisation was created at the end of the Second World War, particular responsibility for the maintenance of peace was given to the five permanent members of the Security Council. Today they are responsible for 80 per cent of the world's arms trade.

Clearly there is a need to establish UN boundaries of unacceptable behaviour beyond which retribution will be certain and swift rather than the dithering of final warning on final warning that encourages the tyrant to think he may get away with it. But it also means getting away from special relationships and considerations of trade. It means looking afresh at the same guidance of true religion. It means standing up and being counted for our beliefs, even when it is difficult or unprofitable to do so.

Indarjit Singh is editor of the *Sikh Messenger*

Dissonant voices, still lives

Stravinsky described the magical sound of Georgian singers as the most virile he had ever heard. Now M'tiebi, a male voice choir, are showing British audiences what he meant. By Michael Church

Make love not war. But if you must make war, then at least make it with music. Two millennia before Scots highlanders were piped into battle, the Greek historian Xenophon noted how the Mosink tribe readied themselves for combat. "The warriors stood in rows like a choir, then one of them began and all the others joined in, marching to the rhythm of the song." You couldn't wish for a neater image of Georgia today, which is where the Mosink tribe once came from.



Edisher Garakanidze, Georgia's leading ethnomusicologist, who recently died in a car crash

Georgia may not – mercifully – be in the same league as Kosovo, but it has always been strife-torn. It celebrated its emancipation from the Soviet empire with a civil war which has left Tbilisi, its capital, impoverished. Yet Tbilisi remains one of the most musical cities on earth.

"I was born twice," said Chaliapin, the great Russian bass. "In Kazan I opened my eyes to life, and in Tbilisi to music." Here Tchaikovsky conducted, Verdi reworked Aida, and a host of virtuosi emerged from the conservatory. Wander round that Conservatory now and you realise both the strength of Tbilisi's musical will and the scale of its problems. The building is decaying and the instruments are beaten up, but the young pianists and violinists are outstanding.

But music in Tbilisi is primarily an amateur affair. Walk into almost any Orthodox church on Sunday morning and you'll hear singing which is warmer and sunnier than its lugubrious Russian equivalent. Outside in the street you may well come across circles of middle-aged gents singing in immaculate three-part harmony. But Tbilisi's chief musical glory lies in forms which are directly descended from those Xenophon found in 401BC.

Last year I watched Edisher Garakanidze, Georgia's leading ethnomusicologist, coach a children's choir he had founded to foster these ancient forms. With ages ranging from four to 15, they conjured up their dark, three-part harmonies with rapt concentration: these were the fruits, he told me, of a trawl they had made through villages where such things were still routinely sung. There was a world of difference, Edisher insisted, between the subtly Westernised music with which professional Georgian

folk-groups toured abroad, and the real unsanitised thing. If I were to revisit Georgia, he would show me. Coming from this diffident but inspiring man, this was an offer I could not refuse.

Four months ago Edisher died with his wife and daughter in a car crash. End of story? No, a new beginning. Edisher's 17-year-old son Gigi has just arrived in Britain with M'tiebi – the male-voice choir which Edisher also founded and ran – for a tour beginning and ending at the Union Chapel in Islington. And only now are those who knew Edisher realising

straight out of Tbilisi. Chadwick first encountered Edisher in Wales, but then went to collect songs with him in Georgia. Echoing a phrase much used by his disciples, she says she "just wanted to be inside that music".

That is a suitably physical metaphor for a profoundly physical experience which has long fascinated Western musicians. On hearing a yodelling descendant from the province of Guria, Stravinsky commented: "It is the most virile vocal performance I have ever heard." Georgian polyphony – usually in three parts – is full of dissonant (but lovingly dwelt-on) vocal collisions.

Just as Christian and pagan rituals merged in Georgia, so did sacred and secular forms of music. But in one key respect Georgian polyphony has remained uncontaminated by the West. Georgian polyphony is tuned to a modal scale: it's not based on Western harmonies. Octaves are out: Georgians think in fifths, and the effect on Western ears can be disorienting, as though the singing is flat.

That is why the celebrated Rustavi choir (to be heard on the St Petersburg label) earned Edisher's mild contempt. For those Georgians don't sing "flat": their tuning has been cleaned up, so as to be acceptable to Western ears. And that is why the music of M'tiebi – the word means morning star – is significant. These singers are amateurs – architects, engineers, computer-programmers – and proud of it: the only trained musician among them was Edisher. But to hear them sing their wedding songs, funeral laments, and Christmas carols at the Union Chapel last night, was to enter a world of irresistible magic – as Edisher Garakanidze's growing posthumous following confirms.

Accent U8 the positive

THE WEEK IN RADIO

RADIO 4 ran a vivid report last month on the toxicity of caffeine – the pre-disposition of drinkers to heart disease, stroke, and so on. Just to see if it was possible, I cut out not just exotic coffee, but friendly old tea as well and, like Philip Marlowe struck with a cosh, a black pool opened up beneath me and I died in.

In a daze of caffeine cold-turkey, I now hallucinate beverages everywhere – thus Anna Massie scrumptiously announcing the phrase "rump Parliament" on the daily segment of This Sceptred Isle (R4) conjures up Earl Grey and bone china, with a palpable macaroon in the saucer. Martin Jarvis, reading Just William – The 80th Anniversary (R4) with his familiar gravelly disdain, treats the listener to freshly ground old Java. Nicholas Parsons in That Reminds Me (R4), looking back over his career, is the very essence of that 1960s standby, Camp coffee.

The Archers (R4), ever a smorgasbord of accent, class and public service announcement, continues to offer characters who evoke everything from toffee-hazelnut-mochaccino to PG pyramid teabags. The actor Jim Broadbent said recently that *The Archers* was one programme he could be relied upon to get up for – in order to switch off. A Pleasantville with problems, Ambridge plays host to the banal and the apocalyptic in deference to the new Reithian spirit of globalisation – panto, adultery, vegetarianism, bovine tuberculosis, illegitimacy, genetically

modified crops, and death – Joe Orton re-written by James Herriot.

Ambridge is still, just, virgin territory to one millennial *Leitmotif* – Salman Rushdie, or "Salman Rushdie, a writer", as he described himself after the first Reith Lecture (R4) on "Globalisation". Admittedly Rushdie followed such hands-ups as Michael "ex-Cabinet Minister" Portillo, Shirley "Also an ex-Cabinet Minister" Williams and John "ex-UK Government Member" Redwood, the CSPO of All Souls. But as Rushdie is virtually in the Coca-Cola league of brand awareness, this seemed to constitute backing into the limelight on his part.

This year's lecturer, Anthony Giddens, had stated that Globalisation should not mean Westernisation, which is fine, but was unable to allay the suspicion that it can only really be Generalisation, in every sense. This was, though, very much a curtain-raiser, with the emphasis on the wood rather than the trees. As one journalist commented, the failure or success of globalisation will be determined by the one third of the world's population who live in India and China. How to bring this about, Giddens has four more mission statements in which to specify. For the moment, he is all miso soup – nourishing but cloudy. PIP TORRENS

fear

ink

could be a new be...
...and sube...
...the most, complex...
...new for those that do their...
...a picture of life, perhaps...
...that time-forged, Thomas...
...the "Kafkaesque", and as the...
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...a too much. Perhaps that...
...the tonight's slight...
...of a thousand, as if...
...a word was still...
...was still...
NICK HASTED

THE INDEPENDENT Champagne Breaks

The Independent/Independent on Sunday have joined forces with SeaFrance European Life to offer you excellent discounts on holidays to Champagne. From just £49 per person you can take a break in the heart of the Champagne region, inclusive of return ferry crossing, two nights' accommodation and a complimentary bottle of champagne on your arrival.

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PARTICIPATING HOTELS

Epernay, Le Thibault IV
★★★★
Sited 20km south of Epernay on the Champagne Route in the heart of the Champagne region, Le Thibault offers a good standard of accommodation, with reasonably sized rooms and en suite bathrooms. The hotel's restaurant is well known across the Champagne area, serving both gastronomic menus and champagne dinners. The hotel can arrange a free visit to local wine cellars and, although this does not include wine-tasting, we're sure that it will be an insight into the Champagne world!

Epernay, Hostellerie de la Reine Blanche
★★★★
The village of Vertus lies 20km south of Epernay on the Champagne Route in the heart of the Champagne region. The charm and warmth offered by the Hostellerie de la Reine Blanche is quite typical of the hotels in this region. The hotel has a swimming-pool, sauna and fitness room and the bedrooms are large and sumptuously decorated, with en suite bathrooms. The Hostellerie also boasts wine cellars holding vintage wines dating back to 1929 to accompany its restaurant's fine gastronomic cuisine.

Troyes, Forêt d'Orient
★★★★
Beautiful natural setting, in the heart of the Champagne region, between two lakes for water sports and on an 18-hole golf course, 15km from medieval Troyes and 100km from the Epernay champagne cellars. Relax around the heated pool, enjoy a round of golf or archery (both playable locally), or exercise in the free fitness room. The generous-sized rooms offer satellite TV, telephone and lovely bathrooms with separate wc. The restaurant has a poolside terrace offering good-value menus. Family rooms available.

Reims, L'Assiette Champenoise
★★★★
Located just 2km from the centre of Reims, with its magnificent Gothic cathedral and famous champagne cellars. Set in large grounds, this exquisite hotel offers excellent facilities and a high level of comfort in relaxing surroundings. In addition to the heated indoor swimming-pool, guests have free use of the sauna. A gastronomic experience at the popular restaurant is certainly not to be missed. All bedrooms have satellite TV and mini-bar. Buffet breakfast and private outdoor parking.

Destination and hotel name		10/04-30/04	01/05-27/05	28/05-31/08	01/09-31/10
		2 nts Ex nt	2 nts Ex nt	2 nts Ex nt	2 nts Ex nt
Epernay	Le Thibault IV	49 27	59 28	69 29	59 28
Troyes	Forêt d'Orient	69 28	79 29	89 31	79 29
Epernay	La Reine Blanche	79 37	89 38	99 40	89 38
Reims	Assiette Champenoise	89 38	99 42	109 44	99 42

Destination and hotel name		10/04-30/04	01/05-27/05	28/05-31/08	01/09-31/10
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Epernay	Le Thibault IV	59 27	69 28	79 29	69 28
Troyes	Forêt d'Orient	79 28	89 29	99 31	89 29
Epernay	La Reine Blanche	89 37	99 38	109 40	99 38
Reims	Assiette Champenoise	99 38	109 42	119 44	109 42

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THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

No sympathy for the devil

Robert Irwin – cult novelist, Arabic scholar, ex-wizard and ace Roller-blader – meets Jane Jakeman

Recently the right-wing historian, David Irving, was interviewed on television. As Irving went on propounding his revisionist views about the Nazi era, a bearded figure stole the show by roller-blading across the background, figuratively waving two fingers at the goings-on in front. The blade-runner was Robert Irwin, academic, novelist and a great liberal experimenter in the Sixties.

It was, apparently, an accident. He did not intend to destroy Irving's moment of glory, though he's bullish about his skill. "Frankly, I'm rather a good skater – TV crews often film me," says Irwin, in all other respects a model of modesty. "Roller-blading keeps me sane and saves me physically." He often roller-blades in London parks, keeping a pencil in his pocket to write as he twirls.

Irwin is not only a survivor of the tumultuous Sixties; he can even remember the decade. He shouldn't be able to, of course: he should be a shambling wreck, his mind and body reduced to tatters. But there's no justice in this world. Here is one of the best minds of that generation and, far from having dashed itself to pieces between the ghastly Scylla and Charybdis of drugs and booze, it is still functioning as brightly as ever.

Irwin is one of our leading Arabic scholars, and the author of five well-reviewed novels, with another out next week (*Satan Wants Me*, Dedalus, £14.99). The two worlds do overlap: his first work of fiction, *The Arabian Nights*, had an archetypal success story. It was published by a small press in 1983, and sales were sagging until Christie's found themselves with a glut of medieval Arabic manuscripts to be auctioned.

No one there knew what they were about. Irwin is one of the few people in the country, probably in the world, who can pick up a medieval Arabic document and read it like today's *Sun*. Sometimes, indeed, it may turn out to have a strange similarity, containing perhaps an account of the "crocodile position" assumed by patrons in the brothels of Cairo or a treatise on the concept of "magnetic meat".

On this occasion, the staff of Christie's sent out for his learned works, and into the bargain got a copy of *The Arabian Nights*. One of them liked it so much that she sent it to a friend in Germany, who translated it and recommended it for publication. So successful was it there that Viking took it up and published the English text again.

This engrossing and totally original tale of metamorphoses and night fears, set in medieval Cairo, has since become a runaway success. It's worthy of *The Arabian Nights*, on which Irwin has published a commentary, and which he studies with a special viewpoint. "How do these Arab storytellers work? What are the creative mechanisms? I'm looking at it partly as an academic, but also as somebody who does it himself."

Irwin gave up academia to become a house-husband and to write fiction. He was then absorbed with household duties and the care of their small daughter while his wife resumed her career as a high-ranking official of Parliament. He knew that he wanted to write, but was not certain that he would find time to pursue either his scholarly work or that of the novelist.

That was 20 years ago, and he has now carved out an interlinked career in both



ROBERT IRWIN, A BIOGRAPHY

Robert Irwin was born in 1946. He was educated at Epsom College and won a major scholarship to Oxford. After a lectureship at St Andrews he became a house-husband and writer, and has continued to produce both fiction and academic work. He is a widely acknowledged expert on *The Arabian Nights*. His first novel was the celebrated cult book, *The Arabian Nights* (1983), followed by *The Limits of Vision* (1986), *The Mysteries of*

Algiers (1988), *Exquisite Corpse* (1995) and *Prayer-Cushions of the Flesh* (1997). His latest book, *Satan Wants Me*, a novel of the occult set in Sixties Britain, is published next week by Dedalus. His non-fiction includes *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (1994) and *Islamic Art* (1997); his anthology of classical Arabic literature will be published by Penguin in the autumn. He lives in London with his wife and daughter.

departments, fiction and Arabic studies. The novels have been varied in settings and subjects, but certain themes run through them all. "All my novels are about madness of one kind or another – obsession, delusion, drunkenness." *The Limits of Vision* was born out of domestic claustrophobia: a housewife obsessed with dust finds herself conversing with great minds of the past, such as Leonardo and Darwin, in an imaginative investigation of suburban psychopathology. *Prayer-Cushions of the Flesh* returned to the medieval Middle East, with an erotically-charged Topkapi harem and its sexual delusions. Like Irwin's other novels, it has a suggestion of the conjuror's performance, of fiction as a series

of secret worlds opening one into another. In *Satan Wants Me*, about a Sixties hippy who falls in with the occult, Irwin quotes Aleister Crowley: "magic is a disease of language." "Crowley was an intelligent man," he comments. "Magic and language are intensely bound up with each other: it's a running theme in my novel." But he would not call himself a magical realist. "I can see why I might get reviews where I'm called that – my books are realistic but they've got a lot of magic in them, things happen which are not of the logical world. On the other hand, I actually hate magical realism. I can't stand those novels where anything goes: a house walks about on chicken legs or a woman has four

hundred babies." He is more interested in the discipline of telling the story.

The idea for *Satan Wants Me* came quite recently on a visit to a museum of conjuring, a place full of old occult paraphernalia in the Marais district of Paris. But the interest in Crowley started a long time ago.

He bought a copy of the master's *Magic in Theory and Practice* in Oxford in 1965. "I thought I might use it for spells and didn't know I would ever use it in a novel. Trouble is, if you want a spell to achieve spectacular results, you have to do things like getting the skin of a gazelle taken from its mother when it's eight months old, and steeped in turmeric and ground-up lapis lazuli."

There's not much fear of Irwin performing Satanic rituals in darkest SE11. In any case, Peter, the narrator of *Satan Wants Me*, has a constant intelligent viewpoint on the diabolic caperings that both attract and repel him. Even as he seduces a sacrificial virgin for his dark master, he is fully aware that he is actually plotting the sexual enslavement of a perfectly nice hairdresser called Maud.

Fortunately Maud, though not exactly a brainbox, is no wimp. She is a karate expert, among other attributes, and Irwin says he identifies with her more than with the colder observing brain of the central character. "Peter is cleverer than the people he's dealing with. There's always a bit of his brain that's not castrated. But I identify more with Maud. I don't want to write about clever people standing round talking."

There's also something of Irwin embodied in the writing demon, Pyewhacket, who inhabits Peter from time to time. "It's the thing that makes me do what I don't want – that pops up in the head and out of the mouth. But it does represent the way writing goes when it's going well, a silent voice that comes from nowhere, almost dictation."

If this sounds shamanistic, the book nevertheless has a solid grounding in Sixties reality. It also has plenty of humour. The diabolism is enacted in cosy Swiss Cottage, and the book is full of pragmatic details such as the sudden alarming appearance of a garden gnome on a doorstep. "Mr Cosmic believed that the plaster figures of gnomes, though degraded in their present-day functions, could still serve as the foci for the chthonic powers of the earth."

The Sixties background comes not only from the writer's memory. Irwin researched it properly by looking at documentaries and magazines, and was struck by how much in that faded decade was actually very ordinary. The mundane presences of Typhoo and Brylcreem and Woodbines continued in an unchanged world, although the razzle-dazzle of fashion and pop dominates our recollections.

Drugs, of course, had a high profile in youth culture. There are some bad trips in the book, out-of-the-body experiences that are very unpleasant indeed. "LSD was still legal when I did it," remembers Irwin. "I think there's a kind of inbuilt mechanism in it. The longer one goes on, the nastier the trips get. It's downright anti-addictive."

So the author is clearly not a slave to the additions of the Black Arts, nor to any others. When I interviewed him, however, I must confess that it had gone through my head for a moment that his home might be the house of a magician. It's built of soft red brick, set exactly where one would not expect to find a house at all, tucked between a pub and a school. It has a secretive high-walled garden; the interior has soft green walls and Indian cushions spread around. But the huge private library is in apple-pie order, and I found the communter with Pyewhacket absorbed over *The Times Literary Supplement*, for which he is a consulting editor.

Irwin has a long scholarly bibliography to his credit and is currently working on a book about Orientalism. His anthology of Arabic literature is due in the autumn. It's a fearsome rate of productivity which only strict discipline can achieve. Any explorer of the irrational must have remained within the bounds of sanity to achieve it. Way out, man... but not too far.

COVER STORIES



TEN MILLION copies and a decade on, Hannibal Lecter is back. On 8 June, in Britain and the US, the fiction world's most notorious serial killer returns in *Hannibal* – Thomas Harris's sequel to *Silence of the Lambs*. The new novel – which landed on the desk of Harris's US editor after a long silence – is the second book in a deal reportedly worth close on \$6m. It opens seven years after Dr Lecter's escape; one of his victims uses FBI agent Clarice Starling as bait to draw the doctor out into the open, in order to wreak revenge...

BY ALL accounts, Discworld creator Terry Pratchett is not the most, or, socialised of authors. Recently, while being chauffeured between events during the London Literary Festival, he insisted on reading aloud to his driver. Not from his own books, but P G Wodehouse. Shortly, as Dr Pratchett, he may behave even more grandly. In July, Warwick University will bestow on him the award of Honorary Doctor of Letters.

JUST AS we thought it was safe to go back into the water comes *Close to Shore*, Michael Capuzzo's account of the rogue great white shark that inspired *Jaws*. The beast lurked off the New Jersey shoreline in 1916, killing five and maiming others. It even swam upriver, attacking boys taking a cooling dip after a day cutting corn. Eventually, a reward was offered for capture after President Wilson declared that Something Must Be Done. So imagine the consternation when a lone fisherman found it entangled in his net. Headline publishes the book next year.

PAT CONROY may have backtracked on plans to write a sequel to *Gone with the Wind* following problems with the Mitchell Estate, but that hasn't deterred Rae Lawrence from embarking on a sequel to *Valley of the Dolls*, the late Jacqueline Susann's bestseller. Lisa Bishop, the author's trustee, uncovered sketches for a sequel, and concluded a six-figure rights deal for what's cheerfully described as "a pink trash spectacular". *Jacqueline Susann's Shadow of the Dolls*.

HARRY POTTER continues on his way to world domination. With two books in the charts and more promised, J K Rowling's debut, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, will soon be an audiobook. Stephen Fry will do the reading for the Cover to Cover label.

THE LITERATOR

Home is where the art is

He helped melt the cold heart of Pinochet's Chile, but can he bridge the gap between gringo and Hispanic? Ian Stavans on the Latino's dilemma

IN THE last decade, Ariel Dorfman has undergone a crucial transformation. He has ceased to be Latin American; instead, he has become something the British do not yet fully grasp: a Latino intellectual, bilingual and bicultural, ambivalent about almost everything, and most especially the place called home.

Latino is the rubric coined to describe US Hispanics acclimatised to American *joie de vivre* yet deeply rooted in the reality south of the Rio Grande. Dorfman's north/south ambivalence is at the heart of the memoir he published last year. It manifests itself in explorations of his complex feelings not only towards Chile and the US, but also towards Spanish and English, the two tongues he communicates in with equal ease. And it is also in the texture of this novel, which, while set primarily in Seville and Santiago and New York, is an American by-product in ways his memoir never was.

Latinos have a difficult time being read in Latin America. There is much resentment for those who left. Dorfman is no exception. His literature has never been fully embraced in Chile, perhaps because he is a foreigner. (He was born in Buenos Aires, and is Jewish.)



The Nanny and the Iceberg
by Ariel Dorfman
Seipre, £10, 360pp

In the English-language habitat, on the other hand, he has the status of a star: his work functions as a bridge across idiosyncrasies.

This is patent in *The Nanny and the Iceberg*. The book juxtaposes themes that have long obsessed him: pop culture and its ideological undercurrent, the baroque Latin American psyche, revolution and democracy. It is a bravura performance, knitted by a suave, hypnotising prose, structured in the form of a thriller with a delayed dénouement.

The main character is Gabriel McKenzie, a hybrid comfortable in e-mails and Hol-

lywood imagery: international politics and Spanish culture. Or perhaps the real protagonist is the mammoth iceberg from Antarctica the Chilean government decides to exhibit at the World's Fair of 1992, to commemorate Columbus's arrival. The iceberg, of course, is but a metaphor: a huge structure obstructing a view of the past. Therein lies Dorfman's message: Chile, he argues, refuses to grow up. It remains incapable of confronting its past and battling the ghost of General Augusto Pinochet.

As I read, I kept on thinking of *Christopher Unborn*, the anti-utopian science-fiction novel by Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes's theme is also the Colombian Quincennial and his prose is also inspired by the Gargantuan pyrotechnics of Salman Rushdie. The difference is the difference between an exile and an emigré artist.

While Fuentes spends part of the year in Mexico and the other part in England and the US, Dorfman is an American whose visits to Chile are promotional rendezvous. He is far more rooted in US culture than his Mexican counterpart, and his novel's main character is proof of it.

McKenzie is, happily, not quite a McDonald's, but not

too distant a relative either. Although he refuses to acknowledge it, he is not only an emigré but an immigrant. Fuentes's cast, on the other hand, is made up of variations on Mexican icons – all insiders to the core, and always looking inwards.

True, elsewhere Fuentes has ventured into US culture, but his forays are always from south to north, whereas Dorfman's latest book travels from north to south. The plot of *The Nanny and the Iceberg* is global, its language infused by Cyber-Spanish, and its concerns those of Latinos today – people whose national borders extend from Hawaii and Alaska to the Patagonia and the Iberian peninsula.

What makes Dorfman's odyssey paradigmatic are his chameleon-like transformations, from anti-American activist to Latin American "boom" writer to Latino intellectual. His latest novel is fascinating as the meditation of an American Hispanic fighting from afar for the triumph of political transition, in a context that is no longer fully his.

Ian Stavans edited *The Oxford Book of Jewish Stories*, and has just completed *On Borrowed Words: a memoir of language* for Viking

A man for all morgues

Fleet Street has reached its last edition, but old hacks don't fade away. Valentine Cunningham acclaims a masterly comedy of changing times

JOHN PRESTON is a mordantly satirical wit to die for. His second novel, *Ink*, is a lovely Chaplinesque farce set in Old Fleet Street, a daft remake of *Modern Times* for our recent Thatcher-Murdoch times, done both with a lot more jokes and a lot more post-Kafka angst.

The novel's main man is Hugh Byrne, a lonesome journalist at the end of the Thatcherite Eighties who is suffering from a bout of writer's block. And that, as every cynic on his very cynical paper agrees, is an unheard-of plight. Meanwhile, the paper is being sold up the river, transplanted to some fairy palace in Docklands. Fleet Street, ancient haunt of rogues, named for the rancid sewer, the Fleet Ditch, is soon to be no more. Pissed old hacks are having to take computer lessons. Mobile phones are the thing of the future. The inky overalls masters of the press have received their notice.

Lame-dog Hugh is about to get his. His ignominious last-chance posting is to be sent out to investigate an anonymous Thames suicide and also – the task everyone in the building fears – to be sent down into the cuttings library to compile the Queen Mother's obituary.

What unfolds, as Byrne reluctantly turns old-time inves-



Ink
by John Preston
Doubleday, £16.99, 428pp

tigator, is not just a cannily contrived mystery, but a jigsaw puzzle of interlocked deaths and disappearances that makes up a kind of exemplary parable about the virtues of old-fashioned newspaper ways.

Elegiacs pile on elegiacs. Old Fleet Street lies dying as it waits for the Queen Mother to pop her clogs. Byrne gradually works out what links the Thames jumper, the dockland Seaman's Missions, the round-the-world yachtsman the Queen Mother once met, the missing reporter, and the dead print workers. Like someone out of a Dickens novel – like Dickens, as a matter of fact – Byrne becomes a man for all

morgues. He even lives in Kensal Green, where the dead in the great cemetery call to him "like a chorus of skeletal Singing Singers". Property values in Kensal Green are not rising, but the novel's many dead keep turning out to be resurrection men. The Queen Mum, naturally, survives the obit. Perhaps there's even hope for the survival of real journalism.

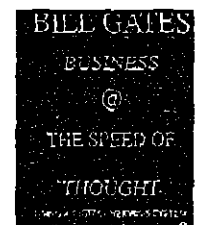
John Preston's superior touch for the comic amid gloom-making modern times does indeed suggest some such survivalism for the human spirit. Byrne's colleagues are stars in a managerial tragedy that comes wonderfully alleviated by the author's sustained genius for farce. Cliff, the loopy Thatcherite (birds shouldn't be fed in winter lest they lose "the will to forage") goads his wife into eye-muscle exercises which prove worthless when she runs over the paper's editor – dashing Cliff's hopes of succeeding the old boy Stanley, who can't alter years of habit, reads his Memorial Service ("New par, cap T. Those qualities that had stood him in such good stead in cap B Barnsley, were to prove especially valuable when he and cap J Janice moved to cap L London, stop"). Rottweiler panic

spreads when tea-boy Darren's tiny mutt runs amok. And Hugh finally clinches it with the moody Vivian when the hot-drinks dispenser explodes over them both as well as the office.

All of course, like the running Queen Mother obit gag, very unlikely – and all the lovelier for it. The novel's jokey tendencies run and run on these looping farcical threads. They make an admirably soft narrative core which exfoliates into the most pleasing set of sordid endings. Byrne's revenge on the boss who consigned him to the obit room is sweet. His joy in the arms of the coffee-scorched Viv is what every Kafkaesque soul needs. And when he finally eschews the scoop his gunshoeing brings him, it's because he has made one of those old-fashioned moral decisions modern business finds so "quaint". Sharp satire, absurdist relish and the elegiac desire for morality in a sordid world could hardly converge more satisfyingly.

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PERSEVERANCE IS necessary to get hooked on this advertorial but important audiobook. The first problem is the listening experience (sorry - business jargon is infectious). The terse prefaces to each section by Gates himself work well, but Steffens's lugubrious voice takes some getting used to. The next is content - by the end of side one you'll be wondering why this tape wasn't called *A Brief History of Microsoft*. But the examples broaden - and, whether you're a queen bee or an ant, the web will revolutionise your ways of life and work.



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BBC
3hrs, £8.99

CATHERINE BAILEY'S dramatisation of Charlotte Brontë's last novel is the most lively and arresting broadcast of a classic novel I have heard. Catherine McCormack is heart-breakingly brave and vulnerable as Lucy Snowe, Joseph Fiennes suitably patrician as the fickle Graham. Harriet Walter brilliantly mean as Madame Beck. The spooky story of an English teacher in a French finishing school, haunted by a mysterious nun, had its origin in Charlotte's own experience of a French school - and the love she felt for the husband of her headmistress.

Ghosts in the swamp

Anna Pavord joins the hunt for a phantom flower through the Florida glades



The monkey orchid: a rare British native, never more than 16 inches tall

Planet Earth

I have always been intimidated by orchids. They seem to look at me in the supercilious way that camels do, noting imperfections of dress and appearance and comparing them unfavourably with their own statuesque flawlessness.

So it was not because of the title that I recently picked up Susan Orlean's book *The Orchid Thief* in Rizzoli's bookshop in New York. I'd enjoyed her writing in the *New Yorker* magazine and I was on my way to Florida. Her narrative, set mostly in that prolific, seamy, restless, corrupted Eden, seemed like a good way to try to come to terms with the place.

It's a non-fiction book that reads like a novel. Its genesis was a brief newspaper report of a lawsuit involving an orchid buff called John Laroche, three Seminole Indians and the theft of plants, including the rare ghost orchid, from the Fakahatchee Strand near Naples on Florida's west coast.

From that small seed grew this brilliantly conceived account of obsession, centred round the enigmatic figure of Laroche, "pale eyed, slouch shouldered and sharply handsome", a man with "the nervous intensity of someone who plays a lot of video games." But like the swamps in which the story is set, Orlean's account wanders off into engrossing side channels, exploring perhaps the background of the Seminole Indians or the history of orchid



The Orchid Thief
by Susan Orlean
Heinemann, £12.99, 350pp

growing or, most rivetingly, the nature of the landscape in which this strange tale is set.

Florida itself became, for me, the most absorbing character in this tale. The author brings the place to life in the most extraordinary way. Here transition and mutation are the status quo. Wetness and dryness drift into each other indistinguishably. Unruly-ness merges into brief order, and then wanders off into wilderness again.

Kuntry Kubards loom up alongside gas stations, both more improbable than dinosaurs in this swampy terrain.

Often, Susan Orlean makes no obvious attempt to link the various elements and digressions of her story. One channel is explored, then a line is drawn (literally) under that particular aspect and she attacks the shifting mass of her subject matter from another quarter. This device, in a lesser writer, would seem lazy, but here the transitions, though

initially abrupt, reveal before too long their purpose in the story.

She uses images with enviable skill, whether describing the Seminole tribe's lawyer "dribbling" his briefcase from hand to hand, the air in the Fakahatchee swamp with "the slack, drapery weight of wet velvet", or an afternoon in an orchid nursery, "a dazed, shambling kind of afternoon, a day seen through a scrim."

Most often, such writing obviates the need for pictures, of which there are none. But this is a book about a quest - a classic genre - and I wanted to know, more clearly than Orlean described, what the object of her quest - the ghost orchid, *Polyrrhiza lindenii* - actually looked like. It isn't listed or pictured in any of my plant books, either. But the fact that she, even after her long, complicated, arduous search, never finds it in flower is entirely apt. Orchids are among a small, select band of flowers powerful enough to set their own agendas.

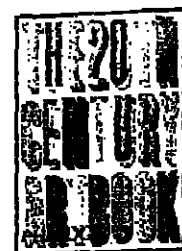
But you don't need to know anything about orchids or any other plants to be engrossed by this strange story. It was not because she loved orchids herself that Susan Orlean was drawn to write this memorable book. In it, she explores (and half envies) the nature of obsession. She understands it as a way to navigate through a world that offers too many options. She is sympathetic to it as a necessary haven for people who find most other people unbearable.

This sympathy extends to her anti-hero, Laroche, although he comes across to the reader as a wildly irritating, self-regarding nightmare of a man. Well, as they say, you probably had to be there to understand his attraction. But she has a lovely way with irony. Bob Fuchs, another orchid maniac, "had three different alarm systems in his greenhouse in case anything went wrong with the temperature or the light or the humidity, so he was usually very relaxed."

A book as good as this deserved better editing. There is no such plant as an antherium. You can have antheriums or anthericums. Which is it to be? No monkey orchid six feet tall ever grew wild in Britain. The monkey orchid (*Orchis simia*) is a very rare British native, never more than 16 inches tall, and usually half that. Paphiopedilums appear as paphiopedilums, amorphophallus as amorphophallus. And is it fair to assume that late Victorian nurseries such as Black & Fry were graveyards for orchids? Mackenzie Black had been orchid grower in chief to Baron de Rothschild in Vienna and Paris before he even set up his nursery. He was no slouch on the orchid front. Quibbles only. I was so engrossed in this book on my flight from New York to Florida, I never even noticed we had landed.

Anna Pavord's *The Tulip* is published by Bloomsbury

PAPERBACKS

BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND
CHRISTOPHER HIRST

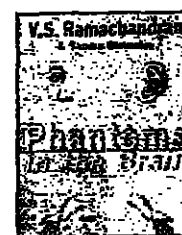
**The 20th-Century
Art Book**
Phaidon, £6.95,
520pp

GIVING A page each to works by 499 artists ranging from Odilon Redon (born 1840) to Damien Hirst (born 1965), this bestselling picture book is now reissued in a chunky, condensed format. The contraction is less than fair to Francis Bacon, whose triptych is reduced to postage stamps, but does little damage to the image of an empty gallery which illustrates a forgotten conceptualist called Acconci (he is masturbating beneath the floorboards). Though one may quibble at the choice of inclusions - a weak drawing by Artaud but nothing by Saul Steinberg - the book is a marvel at the price.



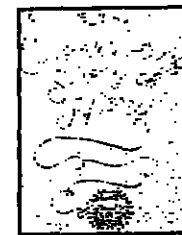
**The Travelling
Hornplayer**
by Barbara Trapido,
Penguin, £6.99,
245pp

A SEQUEL to a sequel, but don't let that put you off trying Barbara Trapido. In a plot as enchanting (and outlandish) as any dreamt up by Iris Murdoch, Trapido's cast of Oxford dons, adulterous writers and profane monks all have one moment in common, the death of a young student in a road accident in London. In addition to laugh-out-loud jokes about the interior design notions of British women, rude sex, and the joys of Allinson's wholemeal bread, this delightfully mature tragicomedy also delivers on life's more taxing emotions, in particular bereavement and loss.



**Phantoms in
the Brain**
by V.S. Ramachandran,
Fourth Estate, £8.99,
328pp

THIS FIRST popular work from a leading explorer of the mind's congeries is notable for lucidity, readability and humour. Ramachandran expresses amazement bordering on delight at the way the mind can react to loss through injury or stroke. One patient applies make-up to just the left side of her face. Others, such as Thuermer, experience hallucinations prompted by loss of sight. As Freud proposed, we are all in thrall to the unconscious. But the author is unconvinced about multiple personality disorder: "If I ever locate a patient with two personalities, I'll send two bills."



**The Everlasting
Story of Nory**
by Nicholson Baker,
Vintage, £6.99,
226pp

YOU DON'T expect grand themes from novel-gazer Nicholson Baker, but here he does swap continents, setting the action in a chilly English cathedral town - or, more accurately, in the head of a visiting nine-year-old girl. Related entirely by Nory, Baker's compelling narrative describes what's on a young Californian's mind while sitting under medieval rafters or queuing up for school dinners - usually something as arcane as the commercial possibilities of portion-controlled toothpaste. Inspired by the author's (and his daughter's) experiences during a sabbatical year in Ely.



Gallipoli
by Robert Rhodes James,
Pimlico, £12.50,
384pp

NOT MANY military classics begin with a haunting: "Three times I was conscious of footfalls behind me. (but) there was no one there." Used as a textbook in the Falklands, this is an exemplary account of the fruitless 1915 conflict which cost over 250,000 lives. Following a bloody landing, the Allied campaign petered out after eight months of trench warfare directed by a general straight out of *Blackadder*: "rubidly gruff, self-important and vain." Thanks to lessons learned at Gallipoli, the UK D-Day force was spared the Private Ryan debacle of the US at Omaha Beach.



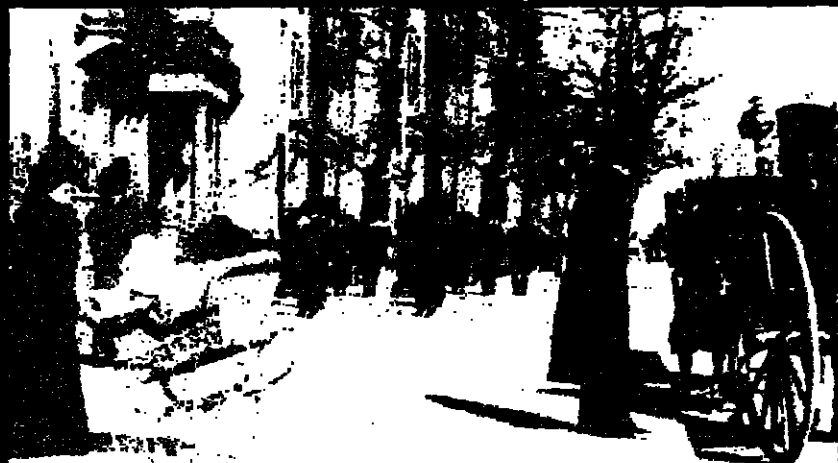
**Time Out Book of
Paris Short Stories**
edited by Nicholas Royle,
Penguin, £6.99,
194pp

IF PARIS in springtime isn't on the cards, novelist and critic Nicholas Royle's selection of Paris tales by contemporary writers is the next best thing. Stories by natives are far outnumbered by the collection's tourist contingency, especially transplanted Americans - Maureen Freely, Erica Wagner and Edward Fox - who, much like the character in Michèle Roberts's story "Fluency", roam the city in search of moments of heightened awareness: afternoons smelling of "hot dust, lime blossom and vanilla", and the perfect café in which to linger over an espresso or glass of wine.

CALEB CARR
THE ANGEL
OF DARKNESS

'Quite enthralling... a novel that plays with but never insults the intelligence'

The Times



'Carr's follow-up to *THE ALIENIST* is just as good a read; a thrillingly macabre drive into the fetid depths of turn-of-the-century New York... bigger and more troubling than a mere thriller, and brilliantly maintains a ferocious grip'

Mail on Sunday



BESTSELLERS

Vikram Seth's first novel since *A Suitable Boy* has shot straight into the top 10. We'll have to wait a week to see how Salman Rushdie's latest, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, fares as it

has only just reached the bookstores, ahead of its official publication date. Compiled from data supplied on sales over seven days ending 1 April 1999. © Bookwatch Ltd. 1999

ORIGINAL FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1) <i>Monsoon</i>	Wilbur Smith (Macmillan)	£17.99	10,085
2 (2) <i>Come Together</i>	Josie Lloyd & Evelyn Ross (Arrow)	£5.99	4,125
3 (3) <i>Charlie</i>	Lesley Pearce (Penguin)	£5.99	3,727
4 (5) <i>The Testament</i>	John Grisham (Century)	£16.99	2,736
5 (1) <i>Bittersweet</i>	Danielle Steel (Bantam Press)	£16.99	2,240
6 (1) <i>When Morning Comes</i>	Audrey Howard (Hodder)	£5.99	1,696
7 (4) <i>Sharpe's Fortress</i>	Bernard Cornwell (HarperCollins)	£16.99	1,485
8 (1) <i>An Equal Music</i>	Vikram Seth (Phoenix House)	£16.99	1,354
9 (7) <i>Night Whispers</i>	Judith McLaughlin (Pocket)	£5.99	1,332
10 (8) <i>LA Connections</i>	power Jack Collins (Pan)	£2.50	1,151

ORIGINAL NON-FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1) <i>Ground Force Weekend</i>	Alan Titchmarsh (BBC)	£9.99	5,157
2 (1) <i>Rough Guide: the Internet</i>	Angus Kennedy (Rough Guides)	£5	4,151
3 (3) <i>Men are From Mars...</i>	John Gray (Thorsons)	£8.99	3,540
4 (2) <i>The Whole Woman</i>	Germaine Greer (Doubleday)	£16.99	3,696
5 (5) <i>Little Book of Feng Shui</i>	Lillian Too (Element)	£1.99	2,229
6 (4) <i>How to Get What You Want</i>	John Gray (Nanaimo)	£9.99	1,903
7 (1) <i>Crichton's Almanack 1999</i>	ed. Matthew Engel (Widen)	£28.00	1,296
8 (1) <i>Complete Book of Gardening</i>	Alan Titchmarsh (BBC)	£19.99	1,161
9 (6) <i>The Year 1000</i>	R Lacey & D Danziger (Little Brown)	£12.99	1,028
10 (1) <i>Business@the Speed of Thought</i>	Bill Gates (Penguin)	£18.99	946

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 <i>Angela's Ashes</i>	Frank McCourt (Flamingo)	£7.99	2,077
2 <i>The Life of Thomas More</i>	Peter Ackroyd (Vintage)	£8.99	1,638
3 <i>A Kentish Lad</i>	Frank Muir (Corgi)	£7.99	822
4 <i>The Gun'ner</i>	Lanny McLean (Bloke)	£14.99	651
5 <i>Falling Leaves</i>	Adeline Yen Mah (Penguin)	£6.99	598
6 <i>Monica's Story</i>	Andrew Morton (O'Mara)	£16.99	504
7 <i>Danny Boy</i>	Andrew Vaughan (Deutsch)	£14.99	404
8 <i>The Other Side of the Dale</i>	Gervase Phinn (Penguin)	£6.99	287
9 <i>Losing My Virginity</i>	Richard Branson (Virgin)	£20	213
10 <i>Desert Flower</i>	Waris Dule (Virago)	£10.99	215

arts
The
natural
choice

see page 41 of
The Independent Magazine

Fir he's a jolly good fellow

COUNTRY MATTERS



DUFF
HART-DAVIS

On Thursday 26 October 1826, clouds hung low over the mountains around the headwaters of the Willamette River, in Oregon. Yet for the intrepid botanist-explorer David Douglas, the dull weather was of no consequence, because he made one of the most exciting discoveries of his life.

For days he had trekked through uncharted wilderness in search of a particular tree, *Pinus lambertiana*, the sugar pine; and when at last he came upon a stand of the giants, he was so astounded by their size that in his journal he cautioned himself not to exaggerate. "Lest I should never see my friends to tell them verbally of this most beautiful and immensely large tree," he wrote, "I now state the dimensions of the largest one I could find that was blown down by the wind. Three feet from the ground, 57 feet nine inches in circumference; 134 feet from the ground, 17 feet five inches."

Needing cones for his seed collection, he took his gun and began "clipping them from the branches with ball," when suddenly eight Indians appeared, covered with red paint, armed with bows and arrows. Douglas tried to explain what he was doing, but they were so threatening that he levelled his gun at them and with his left hand drew a pistol, "determined to fight for life". After a stand-off of eight or 10 minutes, the leader relaxed, and demanded tobacco; Douglas promised him some in return for more cones, and while the Indians went to look for them, he slipped away.

That night in his camp, he was visited by a she grizzly bear with two cubs. "As I could not consistently with my safety receive them so early in the morning," he wrote, "I waited daylight and accordingly did so" - that is, he shot the mother and one of the cubs, presenting the carcass of the young animal to his Indian guide, "who seemed to lay great store by it".

For Douglas, such encounters were commonplace; and from his own densely packed account, it is clear that he was an exceptional traveller, as tough as he was fearless, yet he was also an outstanding col-



Martin Page-Jones, area foreman for the Mortimer forest near Ludlow, amid a stand of 70-year-old Douglas firs

Andy Fox

lector of plants and trees, and next Wednesday, in this country, there begins a programme of nearly 40 events planned to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth.

His influence on the British landscape has been profound, for he introduced more than 200 species of plants - among them lupins, sunflowers, evening primrose, Mahonia and flowering currants - and several trees which have proved of crucial importance to forestry in Britain. Not everyone will thank him for bringing home silks spruce - now the most prolific timber tree in Britain - but everyone who knows *Pseudotsuga menziesii* must rejoice that such a lovely tree was renamed after him, the Douglas fir.

He was born on 25 July 1799 at Soane, near Perth, son of a stonemason. As a boy he kept owls and hawks, and his interest in nature led his father to apprentice him, when only 11, to the head gardener at

Soane Palace. Later, he took himself to a private school in Perth, and by constant study, as well as by trips into the Scottish Highlands, he built up a wide knowledge of botany.

In 1820, he won a place at the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow, and there met the great Sir William Hooker, who was appointed to the Chair of Botany at Glasgow University that same year. In 1823, admiring Douglas's intelligence, energy and industry, Hooker sent him to Joseph Sabine, secretary of the Horticultural Society in London, with a recommendation that the young man should be packed off to search for plants in China.

When that scheme fell through, the Society sent Douglas to collect fruit trees and plants in north-east America. He carried out the mission with such success that in the following year, 1824, he was dispatched on a far more ambitious journey to explore around the Columbia river;

in the far north-west of America.

The outward voyage, round Cape Horn, alone took eight months, and when Douglas reached his destination, he found himself in a true wilderness, scarcely penetrated by Europeans. He spent the next three years travelling on foot, on horseback or by canoe, sometimes with a white companion, often with only an Indian guide, living off the land (salmon, deer and birds), menaced by natives bent on larceny if not on murder. Alternately scorched, drenched and frozen, he endured fearful hardships, yet never stopped collecting - plants, seeds, skins - and measuring everything in sight.

His zeal was unquenchable, his success enormous; but when he returned to London in the autumn of 1827, his supporters in high places found him an uncomfortable guest. In society he became prickly and boorish, and everyone was relieved when he returned to the wilds.

Before setting off again for north-west America, in 1829, he conceived the grandiose idea that he would take passage across the Bering Strait and walk home through Siberia. What a story that journey would have produced! Alas, he never got a chance to make it for, during a voyage in the Pacific, he died on the island of Hawaii in 1834, aged only 35. Rumour held that he had been murdered, but the truth seems more prosaic: he apparently fell into a pit dug to catch wild animals, and was trampled or gored by a trapped bull.

His legacy is enormous. Douglas firs have become the world timber trade's most important trees. Mature specimens rise straight and tall as the columns of an open-air cathedral, so handsome that the Forestry Commission now preserves exceptional stands well past their fell-by date. These areas, known as "retentions", will be kept

indefinitely for their aesthetic value.

Some of Britain's best Douglas firs grow in the belt of greensand that runs through the Longleat, Maiden Bradley and Stourhead estates in Wiltshire. At Stourhead, several trees are more than a century old, 170ft tall, and growing vigorously. As timber they are extremely valuable, and fetch almost the same price per cubic foot as oak: a big tree can weigh 15 tons and be worth £1,000 or more.

And the tallest tree in Britain? You guessed it. At Dunkeld, only a dozen miles from where its namesake was born, a mighty Douglas has reached a height of 212ft, is still growing, and should carry on for another 50 years.

For information on the bicentennial programme, contact the David Douglas Society at Stormont House, 11 Mansfield, Soane PH2 6UE, or the Forestry Commission office in Perth: 01738 442830

NATURE NOTES

WILD FLOWERS are exceptionally profuse and brilliant this spring, probably because so much rain fell earlier in the year, and the winter was so mild. Snowdrops have long since come and gone, but bright-yellow celandines - the other traditional harbingers of spring - are now running riot in hedges, and particularly in churchyards. In places with moist soil,



Primroses: like delicious scrambled egg

the forest floor is dusted with drifts of delicate, white-petalled wood anemones, which need light, and so bloom before the leaves of the trees come out above them, closing the canopy overhead. Wild garlic is in bud, and already bluebells are coming into flower, three weeks ahead of schedule.

Yet nothing can beat the amazing show of primroses, which blaze from grassy banks along lanes and hedges, making green hollows look as though they are spattered with delicious scrambled egg. In living memory, country people would make good money picking primroses by the thousand, tying them in little bunches and sending them to market in the towns. There is no evidence that such harvesting ever harmed the plants, but nowadays picking is strongly discouraged, and under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981, it is an offence to uproot any wild plant without the landowner's permission.

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Straight up, without a twist

The martini has never had an unfashionable moment. But don't stir things up by drinking it out of the wrong glass. By Geoff Nicholson

HL Mencken said the martini was the only American invention as perfect as a sonnet. I suspect he may have had a martini or two inside him at the time, but I know what he meant. The martini is classical, formal, severe, it has strict rules; and it has to be served in the right glass. You know the one, the perfect cone on a long, straight stem. The martini glass.

A New York barman once said to me: "If it ain't in a martini glass, it ain't a martini." And I tend to agree, but this isn't literally true. It's reckoned the martini was invented in the last quarter of the 19th century, whereas the classical form of the glass only became firmly associated with the drink at the end of the 1920s. Until then, martini had often been drunk out of glasses with much rounder, fuller bowls. The conical form had certainly existed before that, and Lowell Edmunds, the world's prime martini scholar and author of *Martini Straight Up* (John Hopkins) describes a 16th-century Italian goblet from Murano that would fit into any modern cocktail bar.

But I think the martini only attained critical mass, only became an icon, when glass and drink were mated, a little like Coke and the Coke bottle, only about a million times more interesting and sophisticated. There are those who think the martini glass is a Bauhaus version of the champagne glass, but I think this may be over-ingenious. That it owes something to Art Deco seems, however, undeniable.

Any sort of civilised drinking has its visual element. We want to see the colour and clarity of wine or whisky, but with a martini it's even more important because there's almost nothing

to see. It's sometimes called the silver bullet, but a martini isn't silver exactly, it's transparent, ethereal, pure shimmering liquid, and you need a glass that doesn't get in the way.

That's why you absolutely don't want a martini glass to have a coloured bowl, it hides the drink, and besides, somebody might think you're drinking something gaily with curacao or cranberry juice. I suppose a coloured stem is all right, and a simple gold line round the rim doesn't detract too much, but it doesn't add anything either. I have to confess I find myself rather amused by those glasses with zig-zag stems, but if you push

You have to pick it up gently, carefully, treat it with respect. The martini is not to be taken lightly

me I'll admit they're probably a bit too frivolous for the purist martini drinker.

The martini glass has become a symbol. You'll find it in international airports as a sign for the bar. You'll find it outlined in neon above some of the sleaziest drinking joints in America. Children's playgrounds in New York have signs showing a martini glass with a red line through it to indicate "no alcohol".

That symbolism has been taken up by the knowing, easy-listening, lounge-and-bachelorpad crowd, and you'll see the martini glass plastered all over current album covers and movie posters. It's synonymous with cool.

But although it's retro, it isn't narrowly nostalgic. And although some of the adherents of cocktail culture may be ironists, there's certainly nothing ironic about the drink itself.

A really good martini glass isn't entirely easy to drink from. If the glass is full and you lift it up carelessly, then the weight of liquid at the rim will form a wave and slop all over the place. This difficulty is no bad thing. It means you have to pick it up gently, carefully, treat it with respect, and this is entirely appropriate. The martini is not to be taken lightly.

And size is really important. A martini glass can be too big, and it can hold too much liquid. This isn't a matter of "units", it's a question of temperature. A martini has to be as cold as Valley Forge, and if it sits in a huge glass for too long it gets warm, and loses its character. Two good little 'uns will always beat one big 'un.

Like all the best designs, you toy with the martini glass at your peril. Maybe you've seen those Bombay Sapphire gin advertisements in which designers have re-invented, or simply deconstructed, the martini glass.

One, by Eilav Nissan, involves two bowls and two intertwined stems, so you can drink and spill simultaneously. Another, by Hilton McConico, has a glass spike on which the olive is impaled, so you can also poke your eye out. This is called trying too hard. There's no need to reinvent something that's already perfect.

Now, having got hold of your perfect martini glass, all you need is someone to shake or stir your perfect martini - and that's where the arguments really start.

Geoff Nicholson's new novel, *Female Ruins*, is published by Gollancz (£9.99)



The martini: transparent, ethereal, pure shimmering liquid - synonymous with cool

A PERFECT MARTINI? CERTAINLY...

OPINIONS ON how to mix the perfect martini vary widely, and discussions between purists can become heated enough to melt the ice in the coolest of cocktail shakers. Don't even mention vodka in certain circles. According to Michael Jackson's *Bar and Cocktail Book* (Mitchell Beazley, £9.99), the drink is made with "one whisk per dry vermouth, one ounce of vermouth, and one ounce of gin. The vermouth, gin and orange bitters in a mixing glass amid a mountain of ice cubes, for a maximum of 30 seconds. Strain into a chilled

martini glass. Add the lemon zest. Ask any drinking guests whether decorations are to be worn." Intriguing bastardisations to offend martini mavens include the £7.25 Fresh Fruit Martini, served in London's Met Bar. The favourite variety, watermelon, is made by squeezing a piece of the fresh fruit into a cocktail shaker with a large shot of chilled vodka, two tea-spoons of

sugar-syrup and just a dash of orange bitters, and shaking hard before straining into a chilled martini glass. Head bartender Guillaume would use nothing but the classic martini glass, such as the one pictured, made by Dartington Crystal (£19.95 from Harrods). For an exemplary cocktail shaker to turn an amateur mixologist into a suave, smooth-talking bar steward, try the Bullet cocktail shaker.

er, £49.95 large, £34.95 small, from Optimum (01332 720449/365808). Fans of the funkier, fruitier martini may like Harrods' range of shakers, from £49.95 (Alessi) to £119.00 (Weston). The gin should be of a very good variety - Bombay Sapphire for choice. More importantly make sure there is lots of it. And don't forget the olive, which should be large, juicy and green.

And if you are plagued by friends who are simply too busy to enjoy one with you, you can always e-mail them a virtual drink by visiting the martini site at www.madbooks.com.

KATY GUEST

DESIGN SHOWS

Thinking Aloud: curated by sculptor Richard Wentworth - the first thoughts of artists and designers, from Joseph Paxton's scribbles of the Crystal Palace to Walt Disney's drawing of Pluto. Camden Art Centre, Arkwright Road, London NW3, 9 April to 30 May

Wearable Art: eight theatrical, cutting-edge jewellery and clothes makers. At Contemporary Applied Arts, 2 Percy Street, London W1 (0171-436 2344), 16 April to 29 May

Modern Britain 1929-39: Thirties design in Britain - lots of deliciously sleek interior and product design. Design Museum, Shad Thames, London SE1 (0171-403 6933), to 6 June

Centenary exhibition of the Ruskin Pottery, notable for experimental, gorgeously coloured glazes. Geoffrey Museum, Kingsland Road, London E2 (0171-739 9893), 13 April to 27 June

Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, furniture and art. Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum, Kelvingrove, (0141-287 2000) ends tomorrow

The Earth is (not) Flat: Knoll celebrates its 50th anniversary again (celebrations were originally held last year) with an almost abstract furniture collection by Maya Lin. Mission, 45 Hereford Road, London W2 (0171-792 4633), 21-29 April

Mish-mesh: breaking the weaves - contemporary international basket-making. At Whitworth Art Gallery, Oxford Road, Manchester 16 April to 6 June and at the Crafts Council, 44a Pentonville Road, London N1 17 June to 15 August

Furniture and ceramics by followers of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Millinery Works, 85-87 Southgate Rd, London N1 (0171-559 2019), 13 April-2 May

The Pleasures of Peace: The crafts in Britain from just after the war to the 1960s. Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, University of East Anglia, to 18 April (01603 593199)

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WOMEN seeking men

CHRISTIAN LADY
33, N.S., medium build, honest, kind-hearted, loves to travel, enjoys country walks, seeks Christian man, 30-45, friendship, leading to romance. £2000

HAPPY OPTIMIST
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
With smile and a wicked sense of humour, witty, warm, romantic man, 40-50, experienced in relaxing weekends and admiring women who stay their own. £2000

IT COULD BE YOU
Slim and attractive woman, 55, enjoys sunny days, enjoys good company, has an active lifestyle, seeks vibrant, attractive, outgoing, tall man, looking forward to hearing from you. £2000

EMOTIONAL WEAPON
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

ATTRACTIVE & INTELLIGENT
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?
Attractive, generally proportioned woman, 40, with a great sense of humour, seeks a genuine, affectionate man, for companionship, occasional romance. £2000

DEEPLY CYNICAL
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

LOOKING FOR YOU
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

TIED OF THE SAME OLD SCENE
Engaging, warm, vibrant, friendly woman, 30, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

AMERICAN WANTED
30, for slim, blonde, professional, with two grown sons and green card, who loves the arts, show and sea and adventure of the mind, body and soul. £2000

NORTHERN LIGHTS
Successful, dynamic, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

SEEDING FUN AND FRIENDSHIP
Bright, carefree, vibrant, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

DISNEY DREAMING
Fair-skinned, blue-eyed redhead, 35, experienced in relaxing weekends and admiring women who stay their own. £2000

VEGETARIAN VACANCY
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ADVENTUROUS FEMALE
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UNCOVER THE MYSTERY
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men seeking women

FIRST-TIME ADVERT
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

HAPPY GUY SEES
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

INDEPENDENT ROMANTIC
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ARE YOU OUT THERE?
Creative, independent, fun-loving, busy, lively, fun, 33, with fun, Tal and slim, professional woman, arts, seeks like-minded man, 30-40, London based. £2000

FROM OUT OF NOWHERE
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CREATIVE MIND
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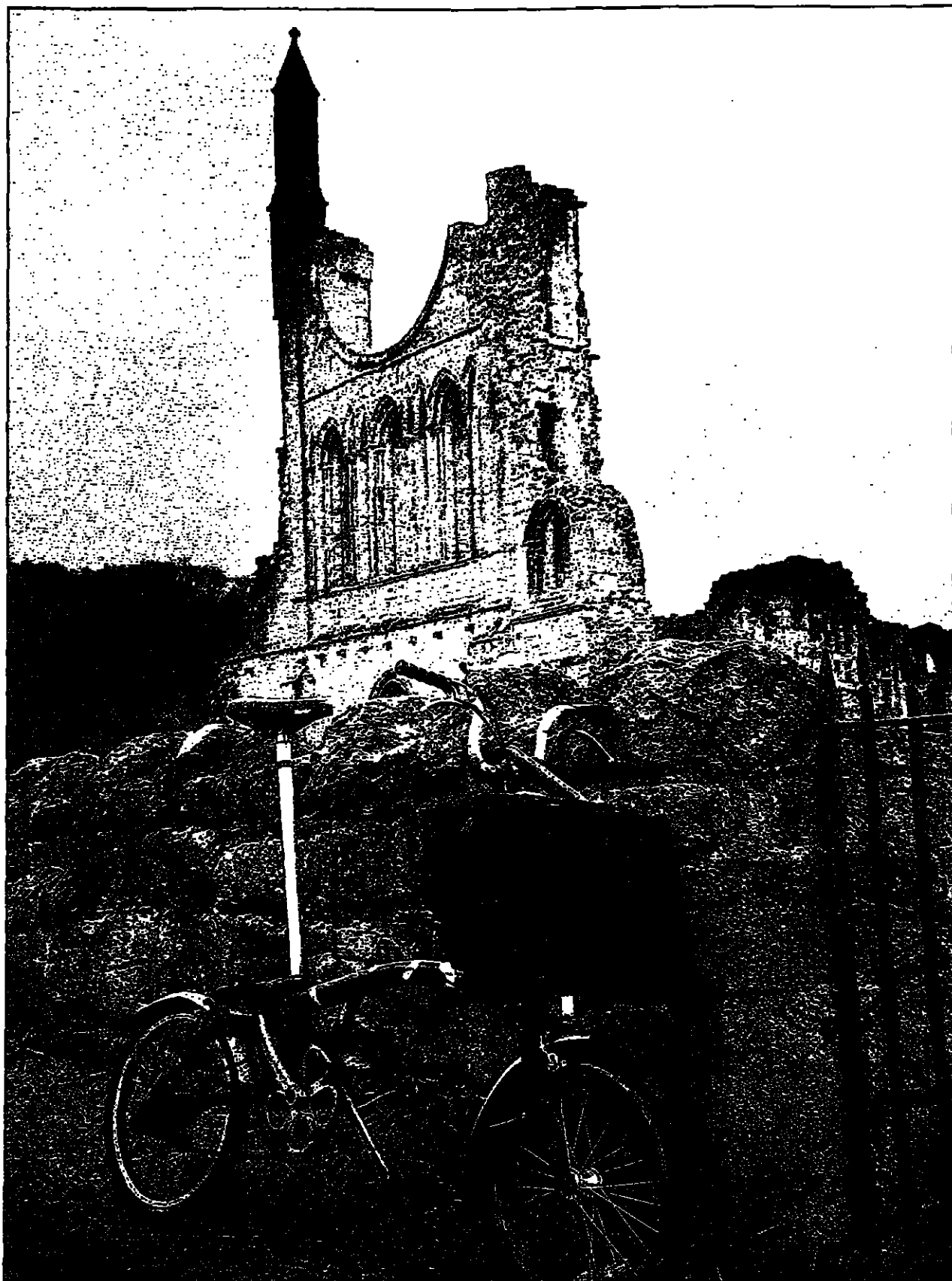
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Bracing saddles

Yesterday, John Prescott opened the latest link in the National Cycle Network. Simon Calder spent a weekend on the trail



The only way is uphill: the remains of Byland Abbey in North Yorkshire, and a rather silly bicycle

Simon Calder

At the start of Britain's newest bike path, a sign points the way to Oberhausen, Middlesbrough's twin town, 982km away. Luckily, your destination is a lot closer. Hull.

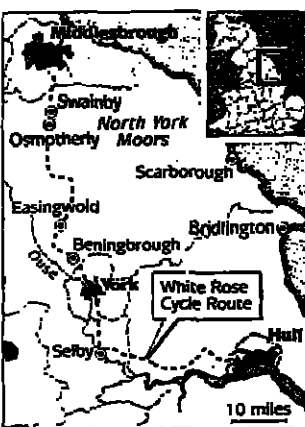
The White Rose Cycle Route ends on the north shore of the Humber estuary, by which time it has joined forces with a human-scale Euro-superhighway that stretches, implausibly, from Southport in Lancashire to Istanbul. And in between, you swoop and swoosh through fine countryside, tempered with swaths of mud and misery, for 123 miles.

Actually, it was more like 140 miles, since the signposting in parts of North Yorkshire is rather worse than in Istanbul (or Southport). Led further astray by some dismal map-reading, I zigged and zagged rather more than the designer of the trail intended. And because I was riding a silly bicycle it felt like 200 miles.

The Brompton is unbeatable for city riding and short trips into the country. But by halfway up the first one-in-six hill, I realised why cycling wags say the collective nouns for this make of folding bicycle is an embarrassment of Bromptons. Two feet and three gears make heavy work of Yorkshire.

To the credit of David Hall -

the man who devised the new trail - he didn't laugh when I met him along the way, though he did express mild surprise that anyone would choose such a conveyance for the trip. The new route, like the other components of the growing Sustrans National Cycle Network, is a challenging combination of minor roads and dedicated cycleways. But, with the exception of a stretch beside the Ouse in



Selby which looks as if it has been visited by a Nato air strike, it was mostly plain pedalling.

Middlesbrough has many claims to fame, besides the twinning arrangement with Oberhausen. The Transporter Bridge shows how Heath Robinson engineering can be incorporated into transport infrastructure: cars are carried over the River Tees by what is, in effect, a giant garden swing.

There is also the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum, and a stylish line in street art. But for me, Middlesbrough will always mean the carpet of shattered glass that stretches uninvitingly south towards Hull. The White Rose trail begins not with the gentle whirring of tyre against Tarmac, but with an unsteady crystalline crunch.

One problem that the charity Sustrans faces is persuading communities that cyclists are a pretty harmless bunch - who, if they are left to pedal without fear of imminent depressurisation, will spend freely. "There's an awful lot of revenue to be had from cycle tourism," says David Hall, who is especially keen to attract Dutch and German cyclists to this part of north-east England. "Visiting

motorists tend to be self-sufficient, but a cycle tourist has an average spend of £30 a day." Given the apparent love of the sort of people who put the "rough" in Middlesbrough, most of that could end up being spent on puncture repair kits.

Suddenly, though, the crystal corrugations give way to country lanes. You unwind as the trail winds gently up into the foothills of the North York Moors. Ten miles an hour is the ideal pace to idle past neat cottages and sturdy churches, interspersed with the deep greens (and occasional deep mud) of Spykewave Hill and Indian Farm. Steer well clear of Goslingmire.

The biggest obstacle of the whole trip comes barely 20 miles out: the grueling ascent from Swainby to Scarth Nick, which is followed by a joyful free-wheel past Cod Beck reservoir - so joyful that I ended up speeding straight past the turn and down into Osmotherly, a lovely Yorkshire village turned into an unlovely car park.

Back up on Osmotherly Moor, the sky darkened to the point of fury and seemed intent on smothering the lunar landscape. Maybe Middlesbrough wasn't so bad after all. Thankfully, the route soon descends back into a picture-postcard land, where ever more extravagant squadrons of daffodils bedeck each new village.

Those equipped with more sensible bicycles and better map-reading skills can slice straight across the moors on one of the optional loops; I was deterred by the route-profile on the Sustrans map, which helps you anticipate the gradients. In the case of the main White Rose route, the profile resembles a graph of the heartbeat of an athlete (across the Moors), slipping into a coma (around

Easingwold) and finally expiring (the remaining 70 miles, except for a brief attempt at resuscitation at the bottom end of the Wolds). Although it is flat, the ride is never dull - especially if the sky is performing. Broad drifts of cumulus are punctured by shafts of sunlight, while menacing storm clouds muscle in from the west. The plain supports a succession of spires, from churches that have long since lost their parishioners, to the mirage-like York Minster.

The ride ends, amid more cartographic disarray, at a gaunt steel bridge in Hull, but the place to finish a story about the White Rose run is bang in the middle: the 24-mile stretch from Beningbrough, drifting through the middle of York and ending up at a lazy arc of the Ouse in Selby. It is a model of happy cycling. To the north, beautifully engineered paths shared by cyclists, walkers and the odd horse; to the south, the bicycling bliss of an old railway line. Along the way, a series of sculptures enlivens the horizon. This is the elegantly designed, handsomely implemented thread of gold in a trail that elsewhere can be a bit ropy.

I commend this short ride along the long path, especially if your bicycle is as unsuitable as mine for a Tour de Yorks. David Hall won't mind: "We don't design these things for cyclists - they know how wonderful it is already. We make them for people who don't like cycling." Try it; even on a Brompton, you might enjoy it.

The map of the ride is available from Sustrans (0117-929 0888) for £5.99. Simon Calder paid £21.15 for bed and breakfast at the Langland Hotel, Park Vale Road, Middlesbrough

Dig out your dancing shoes for a stomping good cause

Book now if you want to boogie for CND in Saltaire next weekend. By Hilary Macaskill

IT WAS 9am on a Saturday morning and there were more than 60 people in the elegantly proportioned upper room, all there to rock'n'roll. It was one of the first workshops in the Day of Dance, a twice-annual event based in Saltaire, on the edge of Bradford. By the end of the day, at least 30 different routines would have been tried out, from Greek to morris, Appalachian to afro-jazz.

I had been to a Day of Dance before, to a session on Scottish dancing. A refresher course, I had thought, though it turned out to be not quite so easy to recapture the steps of my youth. But upstairs I could hear the stamp of Indian classical dancing and it had given me the taste for more. So here I was, to learn how to live in the smartest location - the mellow stone Victoria Hall, flanked by lions that had allegedly been originally carved for Trafalgar Square.

There were couples of all sorts, from the vaguely hippy to two grey-haired ladies, elegant in court shoes and two-pieces, scarves at the neck - and singles too. I started off with Nick, a student, who was going on to do Klezmer (Israeli folk dance) at 11 o'clock. He was serious about this rock'n'roll, practising the steps with solemn concentration before moving into action to the accompaniment of "Shake,

Rattle and Roll". My next partner was a man going on to do the French five workshop. And then there was the wiry man with the Planet Earth T-shirt who knew exactly what he was doing - he wasn't looking at his feet and had mastered the "push-spin" to perfection.

The tuition in this session was a bit of a family affair: the dance teacher's husband was working the sound system, her daughter Arlene was demonstrating, and her mother was pottering in and out of the dancers, diligently examining their footwork as they ricocheted back and forth. It was all enormously enjoyable.

The Day of Dance - the 10th is on 17 April - started with teachers giving their time for nothing, as a fund-raising exercise for Yorkshire CND and Oxfam, and it has been very successful: £35,000 raised so far for them, and other charities. But it has also become a regular date on the calendar for local enthusiasts, though it retains an appropriately earnest air round the edges: food, provided by volunteers, is wholesome and vegetarian.

This year, for the first time, all sessions are in Saltaire, so people dipping between the venues have a little more time to take in the glories of this great piece of industrial architecture. Built at the behest of mill-owner Sir Titus Salt on the

banks of the River Aire (hence Salt-ire), its purpose was to provide housing for his workers. Some sessions will be in the United Reform Church, Grade 1-listed and one of the finest churches in the country. Salts Mill, once the largest textile mill in Europe, opened in 1853 and closed in 1986. With

There was a jolly Romanian hazelnut dance with a lot of stamping (to crack the hazelnuts, presumably)

Saltaire in decline, it was bought by another entrepreneur, Jonathan Silver, who transformed it into a spiralling complex of art galleries devoted to David Hockney, a bookshop filled with lilies and the sound of opera, a cafe that positively encourages one to linger, and interesting shops.

The village is thriving again, with two bakeries, three second-hand bookshops and a pub by the river in what was once the boathouse. But there will be

little time to savour this property on the Day of Dance, because you will probably be rushing from workshop to workshop: you can fit in five if you are very fit. I was more moderate. I only went to three.

After rock'n'roll, I tried circle dancing. It was a little different. "This one is a tree meditation," explained Lorraine from Ilkley, gentle and cheerful. "Reaching up shows the tree growing, and swaying indicates the wind in the branches." Fine, except that I was sandwiched between two people swaying in different directions. One of them was Janice, who had driven over from Doncaster. Later she was off to do the welly dance. "Bring your own," the instructions read, and she had hers in a carrier bag.

There were some more rousing folk dances - a jolly Israeli wedding dance and a Romanian hazelnut dance with a lot of stamping (to crack the hazelnuts, presumably). "The next dance is rather wacky," said Lorraine, and she suggested that we stay holding hands, joined in a circle round a couple of candles and a cyclamen.

Back in Victoria Hall, there were scores of people swaying to the beat of the salsa, following the sinuous moves of Nikolai and Alan - "resident dancers at the Casa Latina in Leeds" - and elsewhere, the jolly atmosphere of a celloid, as

students learned the calls and formed their sets in preparation for the real thing that evening.

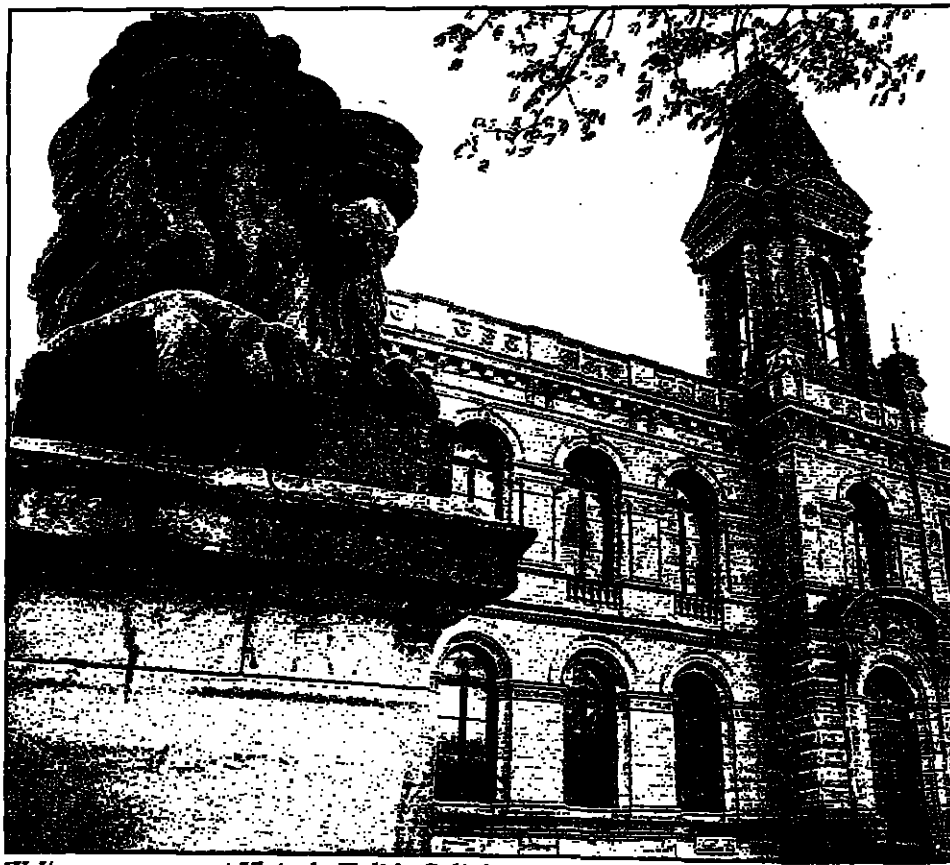
Down in the basement, the welly dance was in full swing, the room full of heat and exertion. There was no music, just the thump of 25 pairs of wellies. The brows of the new practitioners gleamed, as they focused intensely on Naps, the inspirational teacher who had stepped in at the last moment. After just an hour of tuition, this collection of assorted novices were stomping, slapping their boots, clapping their hands, pounding the floor in perfect rhythm.

At the end, two of the star pupils hugged their teacher. For them, this had been much more than a dance workshop, it had been a total revelation.

The next two Days of Dance are 17 April and 16 October. No welly dancing this time, but belly, clog, cha cha, lindy hop and ballet.

Entrance to workshops is by ticket but you can take a chance and turn up on the day. Each workshop costs £3.50 in advance, £4 on the day.

Timetables and booking forms are available from Oxfam shops in the Leeds and Bradford area; or send a sae to Yorkshire CND, Lower Lumb Farm, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge HX7 5SH (enquiries 01274 775161)



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Cross-canal hopping

Brussels has a secret. Alongside its canal, galleries, clubs, bars and restaurants are sprouting up. By Clare Thomson

Panic grips people who move to Brussels: they can't find any water, bar the torrents that fall from the sky and the spurt produced by Manneken Pis, the statue of a little boy peeing. Adding insult to injury, the city's only river, a miserable trickle known as the Senne, was buried in 1866 because of cholera outbreaks and is only visible in a few hidden corners of the city.

But in the poorer districts to the west, where the well-heeled fear to tread, lies one of the oldest canals in Europe. Duchess Marie of Burgundy gave consent for a waterway in 1477, but it took an Emperor, Charles V, to get the project off the ground.

The Willebroeck Canal, which was based on designs by Leonardo da Vinci, was started in 1550 - not a moment too soon for the disgruntled city burghers. Weary of the Senne, which frequently overflowed or dried up, merchants who relied on the river were exasperated by the need to pay taxes to Mechelen, north of Brussels, through which the river flowed.

When the canal was opened in 1561, festivities went on without interruption for three wild days. Some people called it the eighth wonder of the world, and the public transport connection with Antwerp, introduced in 1565, lasted for 250 years until the coming of the railway.

In the 1890s, the combination of the railway - one of the first to be constructed on the continent - and the new Canal de Charleroi, which extended the waterway south into Wallonia, created an urban revolution in western Brussels. Workers from outside the capital flocked to the

flourishing industries of the "Manchester neighbourhood", which centred on the commune of Molenbeek.

The working-class, immigrant area has always been a melting pot. Locals bear the playful nickname "Zinneke", an epithet drawn from an anti-flooding channel of the Senne and meaning "mongrel".

The mongrels of Molenbeek may have disgusted respectable society ("The rich never liked getting their feet wet," shrugs one disdainful native), but the wealthy were not blind to the importance of the city's rat-infested waterways. They simply didn't want to admit they were there.

So the well-off settled on the higher ground in eastern Brussels (now home to the EU's institutions) and enjoyed their elegant boulevards and flourishing parks, leaving the ples to work the waterways. King Léopold II even had a special avenue built so that he didn't have to pass through Molenbeek on his way to the Royal Palace in Laeken.

Today, all that's left of the hope and dynamism that once characterised western Brussels is the odd street name - Rue de Prosperité or Rue de l'Avenir - and some decaying social housing projects from the turn of the century. The only signs of commerce on the run-down Rues Birmingham and Liverpool are a couple of Arabic bakeries and small repair shops.

Or so it seems at first glance. In fact, the neighbourhood is enjoying something of a renaissance as its buildings are reclaimed for cultural use.

A red-brick sugar refinery on Rue Manchester is set to be re-open as a contemporary arts and dance centre; within the warehouses of Boulevard Barthélemy is a cluster of 15 art galleries; and Quai de

Mariemont is home to the Fool Moon, the city's finest jazz, funk and hip-hop venue.

The authorities are, at last, getting more involved. Thanks to new political will and a more dynamic port authority, the port of Brussels - third-biggest in the country after Antwerp and Zeebrugge - is thriving. Determined to extend its international contacts, it recently agreed to twin with the Tunisian port of Sfax.

There's even a celebration of the canal on 8 May, with boat tours, fireworks displays, water sports demonstrations and free bike hire.

"But it's still hard to get people to go west," moans Guido Vanderhulst of crusading social history group La Fonderie, which has been organising boat tours along the canals of Brussels since 1989.

"No one associates Brussels with water." To prod tourists and residents into action, the Brussels authorities have constructed a new promenade area, scattered with bars and restaurants, at the boats' departure point on the Bassin Becc, opposite the Quai des Péniches. If you take a tour, you get to see the proud but dishevelled remnants of old industries - breweries, mills, foundry towers and warehouses - alongside somewhat more modern enterprises, such as oil refineries.

Heading north to Laeken, the small pavilion on the left bank is the Royal Station, built for the exclusive use of Léopold II and used only five or so times.

In sharp contrast to this monarchic extravagance, the opposite bank is home to the remains of a pioneering 19th-century co-operative steelworks, created by a socialist blacksmith during exile from France. The central building housed 72 families, a dining

hall, laundry, school and even a medical centre. Further south, the Petit Château, now a temporary refuge for asylum-seekers, used to be the headquarters of the civil guard, who kept watch over social unrest in the industrial area.

The incontestable highlight of the tour, however, is the former customs house, Tour & Taxis, a massive brick and wrought-iron structure through which goods were transferred to the rail network.

Despite vociferous protests from heritage activists, it faces the ignominious prospect of becoming an American-style rock stadium - a typical fate in a city that has always sacrificed the past for short-term gain.

If the boat trip fails to satisfy your curiosity, other Fonderie tours include a stroll around the Quai de Briques, near Place Saint-Catherine. The slightly forlorn pool in the middle is all that's left of the old port which, along with several docks, was filled in after a cholera outbreak.

There is nothing left of the magnificent glass-and-steel-covered fish market either, though the seafood restaurants that fringe the former quay provide some consolation. Heading west to the canal, there are unmet examples of early 20th-century housing projects, with elegant apartments over ground-floor shopfronts.

If you don't mind being stared at by locals, the best way to wind up your watery trip is with a beer in Au Laboureur, a down-at-heel pub on the edge of touristy Brussels. Or, if you're feeling particularly indulgent, splash out on a meal at Le Cheval Marin (The Sea Horse), a restaurant in baroque surroundings that has watched the rise and demise of Brussels' inner-city port since the 17th century.

The crusading social history group, La Fonderie, is tempting tourists onto Brussels' canals. Christophe Chapel

THE SHOPPING FORECAST

Journey to the Source
No 10: Chocolate
Regarded as the best you can buy, Belgian chocolate has its roots in South America. Once drunk at Aztec ceremonies, the cocoa bean was brought to Europe by Cortés in 1520.

The Europeans developed quite a passion for chocolate although it remained a luxury food until they worked out how to separate cocoa butter from cocoa solids and produce chocolate as we now know it.

The Belgian chocolate industry took off in the late 19th century, helped by the country's colonisation of the Congo and its cocoa plantations. Whereas British chocolate is criticised as a poor imitation (it's made with vegetable rather than cocoa solids), Belgian manufacturers kept standards high and added fresh cream fillings (pralines).

The Belgians are still fussy about their chocolate and like to hand pick their selection. Dark chocolate (with a high proportion of cocoa butter and cocoa solids) is considered the best, along with white chocolate (a mixture of milk and cocoa butter). And the Belgians should know. According to the Insight Guide to Belgium (£16.99), the Belgians eat a belly-bulging 8 kilos of chocolate each a year.

Find out what all the fuss is about by visiting Brussels, known as the "chocolate city" to Japanese tour groups. Each producer has their own secret recipe and chocolates are made and eaten here on an epic scale. Beyond the small chocolatiers and the

commercial chocolate shops, look out for Neuhaus and Godiva. Godiva at 21, Grand Place (00 32 2 511 2537) has a royal warrant and a swarm of lip-licking people outside its indecently tempting window. Godiva chocolates cost around 128BFF (£2.15) for 100g. At Godiva's London shop (247 Regent Street, W1 0171-495 2845), the same amount would cost you £4.50 to buy up 28 prettily-packaged boxes in Brussels and use the money you save to indulge in a chocoholics tour of the city. Travel out on Eurostar (0990 186186) with a £69 day return ticket and finish your day Aztec-style with a visit to Planète Chocolat (24, rue du Lombard), watching elaborate chocolate constructions take shape while sipping a hot chocolate.

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Bruges's consolation prize

It may be invaded all year by tourists on short breaks, but Bruges has kept its annual early-music festival as a treat for locals. By David Laszlo

IT WAS our second visit to the restaurant but in Belgium's mini-break capital, that made us regulars. In the quiet canal-side square, we were welcomed like old friends. Around us, the discreet and elegant façades of Bruges's houses and churches. Ahead of us, delicious seafood and a concert of German early music: the last evening of a week of gastronomic and musical feasting in one of Europe's loveliest towns.

The annual early-music festival is two weeks of top-flight Renaissance, Baroque and Romantic music from all over Europe. Despite its 35 years of existence, the festival remains something of an insider tip, and is hardly marketed at all. We heard about it from a musician friend who had performed there, but it took three attempts to get hold of a programme from the Bruges Tourist Office, by which time some concerts had sold out. Once we got there, however, we realised that despite the in-

ternational repertoire and world-famous talent, this was, in many ways, a local festival. In a city full of tourists, the audiences were almost entirely Flemish. The difficulties we experienced getting information and tickets weren't hostility or indifference, just lack of practice. And the festival isn't marketed in the UK because it doesn't need to be: the concerts

are sell-outs without the help of foreigners. The concerts feel like a consolation prize to the citizens of Bruges for losing their city to the tourists.

Early-music specialists have been expanding the definition "early", and the next festival includes music up to the 19th century, played on authentic instruments. The focus of the 1999 programme will be music from Mediterranean countries.

Concert venues are mostly churches and ticket prices are reasonable. At the lunchtime performances, which are held in a concert hall, the repertoire is less well known so you can make some real discoveries. Tickets are sold on the door.

You do, however, need to book the evening concerts well in advance. Contact the tourist office for a programme as early as possible. During the two weeks of the festival, at the end of July and the beginning of August, you could attend two concerts a day every day. We had a week, and decided to

combine concert days with days spent exploring the city. Bruges is ideal for this kind of slow-paced tourism. The tiny medieval city, criss-crossed with canals and bridges, is full of attractive pubs, elegant shops, and small scale museums where you can happily spend the hours between the end of lunch and the early evening beer.

By the third day, we had tired of complete inactivity and joined one of Bruges's many bike tours. The flat towpaths and frequent stops meant that this was an easy ride even for out-of-practice cyclists.

In fact, the last thing you want to have in this city of narrow cobbled streets is a car. We travelled by Eurostar to Brussels, with a quick connection to Bruges, promising ourselves a day's car hire for a trip out if boredom set in. In the event, we didn't even consider leaving Bruges. We had found that rare thing, a genuinely relaxing holiday.

FACT FILE

Brussels:
Contact the Tourist Office for Brussels and Ardennes (0171-867 0311) for more information about canal tours.

Bruges:
The 36th Festival Musica Antiqua runs from 24 July to 7 August 1999. For a programme and bookings call 00 32 50 44 86 86. David Laszlo paid £284 for return

travel on Eurostar and five nights B&B accommodation through VFB (01242 240336). Brouwerij Straffe Hendrik is at Walplein 26, 3000 Brugge (00 32 50 33 26 97). Bike Tours cost BF450 (£7.50) per person from The Back Road Bike Co (00 32 50 34 30 35). For further information contact Tourism Flanders Brussels on 0171-458 0044

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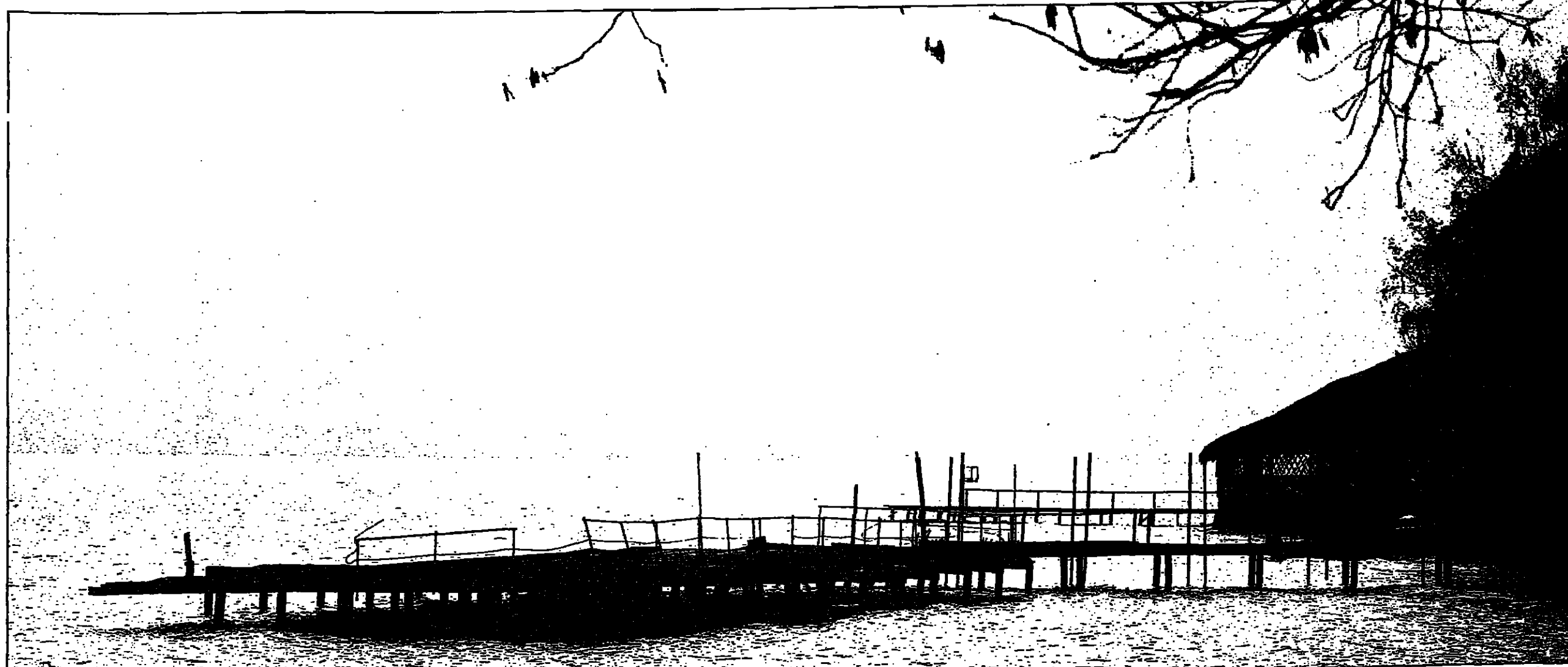
From Bulawayo drive west through Matebeleland to the Hwange National Park for one night and onwards to the 5-star Hotel Elephant Hills for two nights. The Hwange National Park is home to many of the wild animal species of Southern and Eastern Africa including elephant, lion and rhino and many different species of birds. This circuit around the beautiful country of Zimbabwe concludes with a flight to Lake Kariba and the Lakeside Inn for two nights before returning to Harare once more and the return flight to London Gatwick. It should be noted that this tour represents remarkable value in that the tariff is hundreds of pounds lower than can be found elsewhere.

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Lake Ypacarai, Paraguay's version of the Essex Riviera resort of Leigh-on-Sea, can be reached from the capital, Asunción, by steam locomotive. The fare is 60p return

Rob Cousins/Robert Harding Picture Library

The lost heart of South America

Paraguay is probably the most distinctive, eccentric and lovable country in Latin America. By Hugh O'Shaughnessy

The trouble with Paraguay is that we're an island surrounded by land. Thus does my friend Julio César describe the fate of a country in the centre of one of the world's biggest land masses but which is the most isolated, idiosyncratic and indeed enjoyable of all the countries of the Western Hemisphere for a foreigner to visit. Isolation and otherness are in the Paraguayan blood.

Some Latin American countries are so similar that you could be forgiven for not remembering which one you were in. In Paraguay you could never think you were anywhere else.

To keep the Paraguayans from foreign entanglements 150 years ago, the dictator Francia forbade anyone to leave or enter the country. Foreigners who got here had to stay. But thank God Paraguayans are a little behind the times; it makes them kind, friendly and welcoming as no others.

Not much has changed here since Henry Pilling, the retired bank manager from south London and hero of Graham Greene's novel *Travels with My Aunt*, arrived a decade or two ago. Greene addicts will remember he settled here, married the police chief's teenage daughter and devoted his declining

years to a life of gentle smuggling. Today, as in Pilling's time, the hot winter sun beats down and even when the tropical heavens open, the rain falls as warm water and does nothing to bring the temperature below 96°F.

General Alfredo Stroessner, the man who ruled the country with a cheque book in one hand and a wooden club with projecting nails in the other, has been in exile in Brazil for a decade now but his cronies, quarrelling among themselves, still rule.

The only difference today is that you don't necessarily go to prison for scrawling anti-Stroessner slogans on the walls. The usual summer torpor is more marked this year with the economy and political scene in a slump. Greene would certainly recognise it. There was some political turbulence in the streets last month – the vice-president was shot dead, apparently at the behest of the president, but he has fled, the affair is over and there is no reason to call off a visit. The capital, Asunción is a good deal safer than many cities in neighbouring Brazil.

And there is a lot beneath the apparent tropical torpor. This is the only country on the continent of America where under Spanish colonialism the indigenous people, the *Guaraní*, maintained themselves. There is certainly a thick layer of

which embraces a long line of generals and dictators, not just Stroessner but Morínigo, Estigarribia, López, Francia and dozens more. Modern Western ghastliness has arrived in the form of Burger King, one or two shopping arcades, Citibank and parking meters.

But Paraguay remains something other, a country which despite its drawbacks is nicer to visit than any of its neighbours.

Perhaps it's the Indian influence: the *Guaraní* language is widely spoken and written. Indeed, perhaps half the population speaks no Spanish. The pace of life is quiet: in the countryside there is a closeness to nature which springs from the fact that the *Guaraní* were, and still are in some places, nomadic people, hunters and gatherers. "There is a Paraguayan philosophy, I tell my students to think hard about it," says

Benno Glaeser, who teaches philosophy at the university. Transport, or the lack of it, provides big clues to the Paraguayan soul.

For some months now Asunción hasn't been what it was. They've taken away the ancient tramcars which clattered up and down the hills of the capital for years after their retirement from Brussels (I always used to wonder what Paraguayans made of the notices inside them in

Flemish and French which prohibited spitting.) Anyway they're gone, replaced by old buses.

But enthusiasts for antique modes of transport need not despair. Every Saturday and Sunday morning at the 19th-century station, even more ancient locomotives are steamed up with a wood fire in their bellies and sent down the track for an hour or two with one battered carriage full of happy Paraguayans to Lake Ypacarai, the country's counterpart to the Essex Riviera resort of Leigh-on-Sea.

The old locos, one of them English, are beloved of their drivers. "You get an affection for them," says Juan as he piles logs into the boiler. It burns 20 cubic metres of wood there and back. The return fare is 3,000 *Guaraníes* (60 pence).

A car will get you there in half an hour but it's not as jolly as the train. Though it's only 13kms long, Ypacarai is the nearest the Paraguayans get to a seaside and there's enough room for good water-skiing or just lazing on the sand.

It is not so long ago that these ancient trains, together with almost equally ancient river boats, were the only means of getting to the wet tropical plain in the heart of South America that is Paraguay.

The port, too, is much as it was when Graham Greene described it in his novel. It stands not far from

the foot of the Presidential Palace, the Palacio de López. According to legend, in the middle of the last century its British architect, Alonso Taylor, adopted the design from one he had prepared for Kew College, Oxford, but which sadly came second in the competition. With its tower and pinnacles and Victorian gothic look the Palacio, like the station, has a touch of the Palace of Westminster about it and sits oddly in the centre of South America.

There is not much international passenger traffic on the river these days but the river is still the main highway to many places up country. Tied up beside the quay was the good ship *Guaraní*, which has brought its cargo of river fish, a battered car, tons of slaked lime and passengers down from Vallemi, two days to the north. After the stevedores precariously manoeuvred the car from off the hold they set to bringing the time out from the hold. Meanwhile enormous fish of species unknown elsewhere were hauled out from the fo'c'sle to the delight of the capital's waiting fishwives.

I must take that boat up to Vallemi one of these days. I'm sure there would be someone aboard who, to pass the time, would teach me the first elements of the *Guaraní* language as we chug up the great Paraguay River into the unknown heart of South America.

FACT FILE

Getting there
There are no direct flights from the UK to Paraguay. Here are some alternatives.

Journey Latin America (0181-747 3108) has a fare of £635 to Asunción via Madrid on Iberia. Or, fly to the Iguaçu Falls at the east of Paraguay; Argentina and Brazil have airports close to the Paraguayan border. South American Experience (0171-976 5511) offers a fare of £462 to Buenos Aires on Aerolíneas Argentinas (via Madrid), with a £192 return to Iguaçu.

Getting around
You can build a trip to Paraguay

into the new improved Mercosur Air Pass which gives you laughably cheap transport around Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, eg from Bahia, home of Afro-Brazilian culture to Cape Horn. The pass is issued with a transatlantic ticket for travel on most airlines from these countries and in different prices and distances. For instance, the £200km pass costs you just £250.

Accommodation
Highly recommended is the ancient but spacious, comfortable and friendly Gran Hotel del Paraguay at de la Residencia 902 100 595 12 2000511



When a rest is as good as a climb

If your idea of a hike is a stroll across Hampstead Heath, the thought of climbing Aconcagua – the highest mountain in the world outside Asia – will make you need to lie down. By Justin Rowlett

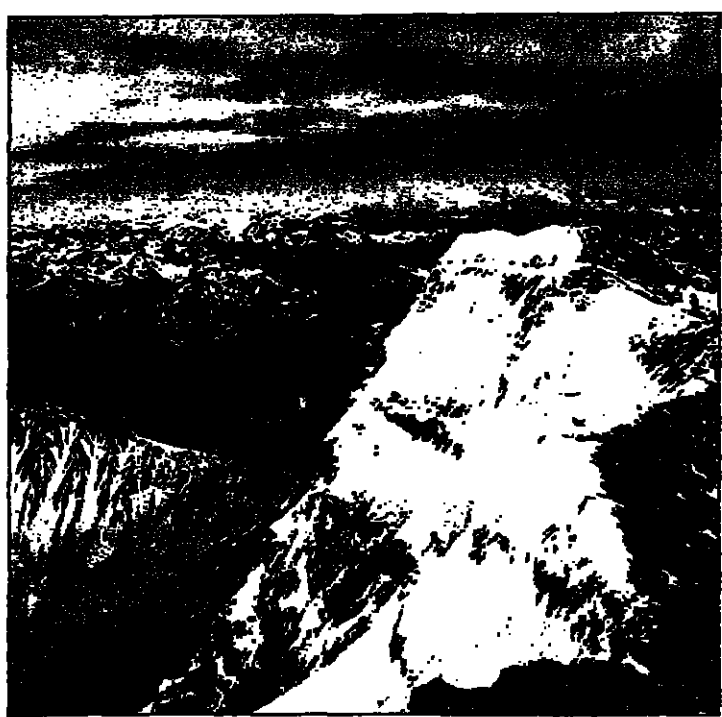
IT WAS the most dangerous section of the mountain. The wind was picking up and we had to negotiate an ice-covered path 2km above the valley floor. The problem was I couldn't seem to trust my legs anymore. I had just climbed to the top of Aconcagua – at almost 7,000m, the highest mountain in the world outside Asia – and I was suffering from the altitude. It wasn't that I'd lost all co-ordination, but I was walking as though I was more than a little tipsy.

Until now, my idea of a hike had been a Sunday afternoon stroll on Hampstead Heath. That's until a mountain-minded friend persuaded me that it was time I attempted something "a little more ambitious".

I began to regret my decision on my very first day in Argentina when, sitting in an elegant Buenos Aires café, enjoying a *café chico* and the chatter of Argentine high society, I read that a Czech hiker had died on Aconcagua of altitude sickness.

Two more bodies were brought down the mountain on mules the day before we began the hike. A ferocious storm had struck the highest camp on the mountain, tearing tents apart. Two walkers had been caught unawares and died of hypothermia. Their deaths brought the year's total to five fatalities. Yet 1999 has apparently been a good year.

I'd been warned that there was, on average, one death in 300 climbers on Aconcagua. Compared with other mountains, that's not too dangerous but I was horrified – horrified that I had let myself in for such a perilous enterprise, and appalled by the senseless deaths of



The Andes as seen from Aconcagua Pictures Colour Library

these people. At the same time, though, I'll admit that part of me was excited by this proximity to danger.

The real surprise was just how unexciting most of the hiking up Aconcagua was. This is no soaring cathedral of a mountain but rather a great mass of dark rock circled by sweeping scree slopes. There is a certain magnificence in its bulk, but the attraction is its height and the ease of access. Most of the deaths are down to inexperienced,

unguided people being careless. This is – famously – the highest hike in the world. Three thousand visitors a year tread the well-defined path that zigzags up Aconcagua's flank.

But there are still two great challenges in climbing Aconcagua: the altitude and the weather. I had my first taste of altitude after the two-day hike up to base camp: a tent city perched 4,000m up the mountain on the lateral moraine of a glacier. It was a nauseous, detached feeling

accompanied by a pounding headache and I felt as if my brain was swelling in my skull, which it probably was.

There's no sure way of avoiding the effects of altitude, but they can be minimised with proper acclimatisation. The climbers' mantra – climb high, sleep low – might be better rephrased as walk a little bit then rest a lot. We had three whole days resting and some days we walked for as little as three hours ... and then rested some more.

I like to rest. The problem is there's not a great deal to do on the lateral moraine of a glacier. There are no plants or animals, just rock and ice and, although the views are stunning, they don't change. I could trace most of the route up the mountain from my tent and, until summit day, wherever we camped we got slight variations of the same view.

Fellow climbers provided an amusing diversion but, compared with typical Aconcagua Man (it's mainly males who climb it), my weekend rambles don't make for good yarns and I was soon ready for a break from all the resting.

Walking at altitude is much like walking elsewhere but it takes much longer and hurts more. We snaked up the mountain like a great long millipede and there was a pleasant hypnotic quality in the steady monotony. I was lucky: I didn't suffer much from the altitude and, weather-wise, we had warm sunny days and, by the standards of Aconcagua, little wind. If you aren't lucky, it can be hell on earth. Winds of 130km per hour are not unusual, and the

temperature in summer can fall to -30°C, giving a wind chill that doesn't bear thinking about.

Summit day arrived and we set out for the top at 3.30am on a freezing morning. By the time dawn broke we were way above the clouds, above everything. At one point we could see the shadow cast by Aconcagua across what seemed like the entire Andes. As if to compensate for these great views, the hiking got very tough. At these altitudes your muscles get 20-30 per cent of sea-level oxygen and it's very tiring, like a 12-hour marathon but stopping to pant after every step.

Suddenly, though, we were there. For 10 minutes we were on top of the highest of the high Andes with the world stretching away below us. Then the clouds swirled in and we could have been on an icy slab of rock almost anywhere.

Now all we had to do was walk back down. That's when my legs went. The guide tied a rope around my chest and led me down the difficult bit like a dog on a lead. A trifle humiliating, perhaps, but nothing that couldn't be cured by a jolly good rest.

The best time to climb Aconcagua is at the end of December, so now is the time to start preparing. Fly to Santiago, Chile; fares are as low as £400 return, though they rise steeply in December. Next, take a five-hour, £20 bus ride to the Argentine city of Mendoza, to secure the appropriate permit. For more details, consult the *South American Handbook* (Footprint, £22.99)

THEATRICALS AND THIEVES IN BOGOTA

PLENTY OF people get robbed in Bogotá, and with one killing every hour, the Colombian capital is possibly the most murderous city in the world. So it is all the stranger, and oddly terrifying, that some villains indulge in theatrical robbery.

I had come from village life in Tobago, so on the afternoon of the robbery I am in the wrong frame of mind for a large South American city. I enter a bank and ask if I can change a traveller's cheque. The answer is no, but a man in a suit, who is reading a paper in the bank's foyer, says he knows where I can. "Man A" is middle-aged, rich-looking and friendly. He takes me to an Imex exchange bureau. I change the money while he waits.

As we leave, I am becoming suspicious. A couple of minutes later a man crosses in front of us and drops a large wad of pesos. This is "Man B". Man A picks it up. I think he is going to steal it so I approach Man B and tell him Man A has his money. He waves me away and walks in another direction. Man A now takes me into a café. I am befuddled, but think: "how typical – he wants a free meal for helping me." We sit down and ask for two drinks. I ask Man A his profession and he shows me his business card: furniture supplier. I believe him.

Man B comes in sweating and looking worried. He is wearing a suit and tie. He produces a small money bag with a zip and says his money fell out of it, and asks for it back. He shows an identity

card for a public transport company and says it is their money. He asks Man A to show him his (Man A's) money. Man A produces a huge wad of pesos (it must have been more than \$1,000 worth). Man B shouts at Man A: "There is more!" Man A then produces the wad dropped in the street, and hands it to Man B.

I began to feel I have stumbled into a Gabriel García Márquez story. Man B says: "I dropped more money!" Man A denies he has it, which I know is true since he has handed over all the money Man B dropped. Then Man B asks me to produce my money. I refuse. A policeman walks in and sits three tables away. The café is full. Man A and Man B become more heated. I'm nervous. I think: "I'll show Man B the money I got from Imex and the exchange receipt, and that will settle things."

I take out the receipt and my money, and count it out in front of him. Man B grabs it from across the table. I shout: "No!" Man B examines the wad and agrees that it is not his money. He appears to put my money in his money bag and hands it back. Man A and Man B get up and rush out.

At this moment I find that the bag does not open (the zip has been tampered with) and I realise I have been robbed. After 30 seconds I manage to open the bag and find a wad of worthless paper. The tourist police call Man A "El Contro", and say they cannot find him or his accomplice.

ANDREW JAMES



48 hours ... in Montreal

Feel like a spot of Canada dry? Head for Montreal and its festive mix of French and English culture. By Cleo Paskal

Why go now?

After months of hibernation, Montrealers are coming out of their dens and wandering around the streets in a dazed euphoria. Winter is dead and the wake will last all summer with world class festivals (jazz, theatre, comedy, film, dragon boats, beer), a Grand Prix and enormous amounts of sun cream slathered flesh. Just about any event will be turned into a major party - any excuse to wear T-shirts outdoors.

Beam Down

Two scheduled airlines fly between Heathrow and Montreal, British Airways (0345 222111) and Air Canada (0800 247226). Until July fares cost around £350 return. You can expect to pay around £50-£100 less on a charter flight, of which there will be several from Gatwick from May onwards.



The futuristic apartments built for the 1976 Olympic Games

A Walk In The Park

The Botanical Gardens, out in the East End (near the spaceship stadium left over from the '76 Olympics) is second in the world only to Kew Gardens. Really, it even has an insectarium with occasional insect tastings. And, if the weather is bad (or even if it's not), just across the road is the Biodome, a spectacular indoor wildlife park/aquarium/ecosystem. The Botanical Gardens and Insectarium is at 4101 Sherbrooke East (00 1 514 872 1400) and the Biodome is at 4777 Ave Pierre-de-Coubertin (00 1 514 868 3000).

Demure Dinner

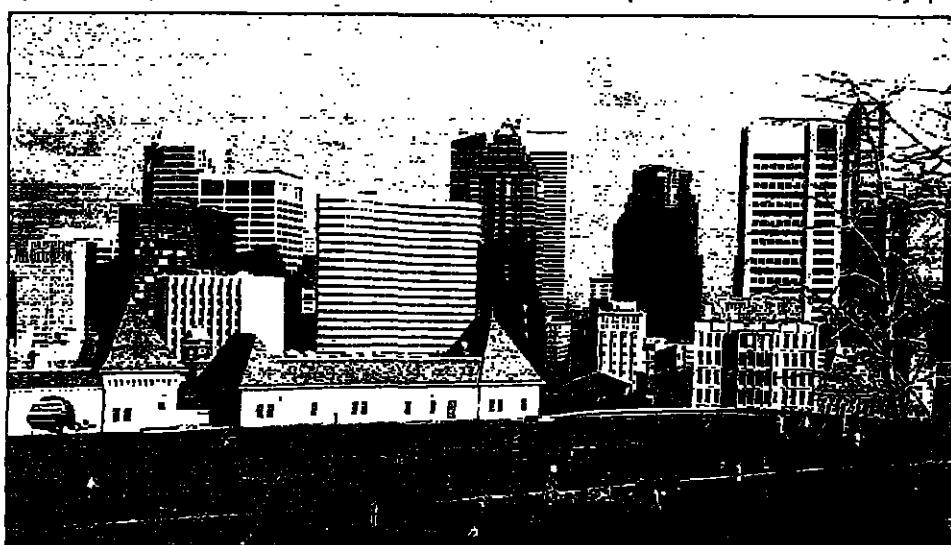
There are enough top chefs in Montreal to sink any diet. One of the best places to dine is Restaurant Chez Chez (1402 de l'Eglise, Saint Laurent, 00 1 514 744 0590), a romantic French restaurant in the northern part of Montreal. Go more than twice and the waiter will know your name and culinary predilections. Prices are very reasonable, at \$15-\$25 (£6.50-£10.50) for a three course meal. If you prefer cheap, fattening food served by sullen waiters, the old Montreal stand-by is Schwartz's (13895 St Laurent, 00 1 514 842 4813) in the cholesterol-clogged heart of the Main, renowned for its delicious smoked meat sandwiches and surly service. A meal should set you back about \$10 (£4.50). And 5 lbs.

Take A Ride

Ever want to take a cruise in the comfort of your own bus? Well, now you can. The Amphi-bus (00 1 514 849 5181) will drive you around the streets of Montreal and then right into the St. Lawrence River. Just remember to keep the windows wound up. It leaves from the Old Port, daily from 1 May, and costs \$18 (£8) for adults, \$15 (£6.50) for concessions.

Lunch on the Run

Montreal is home to two of the best culinary oddities on the planet. The first is poutine, a concoction made from french fries, gravy and cheese curds. The second is the Orange Julep, a drink made from a secret recipe that seems to involve orange juice, milk and sugar. Both taste better than they sound. Poutine you can find everywhere, including McDonald's. But there are only two places you can get real Orange Juleps, both run by members of the family that invented it. One has a real 50s diner feel and is on Sherbrooke (Orange Julep, 3100 Sherbrooke East, 00 1 514 522 3711) on the way out to the Olympic Stadium. The other is a bit north of downtown but the bonus of this branch is that it's shaped like an enormous orange (Orange Julep, 7700 Decarie, 00 1 514 738 7486).



With the end of winter the city is waking up

An Aperitif

St. Laurent Avenue (aka The Main), north from Sherbrooke street, is the place to go for everything from cappuccino to cocktails. The range of places to see and be seen in is staggering. Waves of immigrations and recent gentrification have produced a street that offers everything from Bulgarian delis to ultra-trendy discos (yes, such a thing exists). In most cases people are friendly and the area is considered a demilitarised zone in the French-versus-everyone-else tensions. Friday night swing dancing at the Portuguese-owned Bar St-Laurent (1155 St Laurent, 00 1 514 273 2359) is a must.

Sunday Brunch

Traditionalists head to Beauty's Restaurant (93 Mont Royal West, 00 1 514 849 8883) for freshly-squeezed orange juice and pancakes with maple syrup. Traditionalists of a different sort head to Chinatown (St. Laurent Avenue, south of Chinatown, 00 1 514 842 4813) for dim sum.

Get Your Bearings

Montreal is a 494 square kilometre island in the St. Lawrence seaway, bisected north/south by Sherbrooke street (1) and east/west by St. Laurent Avenue (2). Historically, east of St. Laurent was French speaking, west of St. Laurent was English speaking, and St. Laurent itself was the Jewish quarter. Over the years, most Jewish people have moved and the English/French divide has softened. If you stick to well-trodden tourist routes, you should be able to get by just fine in English, but should you feel like straying, make sure you have a phrase book handy. Quebec French is quite, er, unique.



Montreal's imposing City Hall

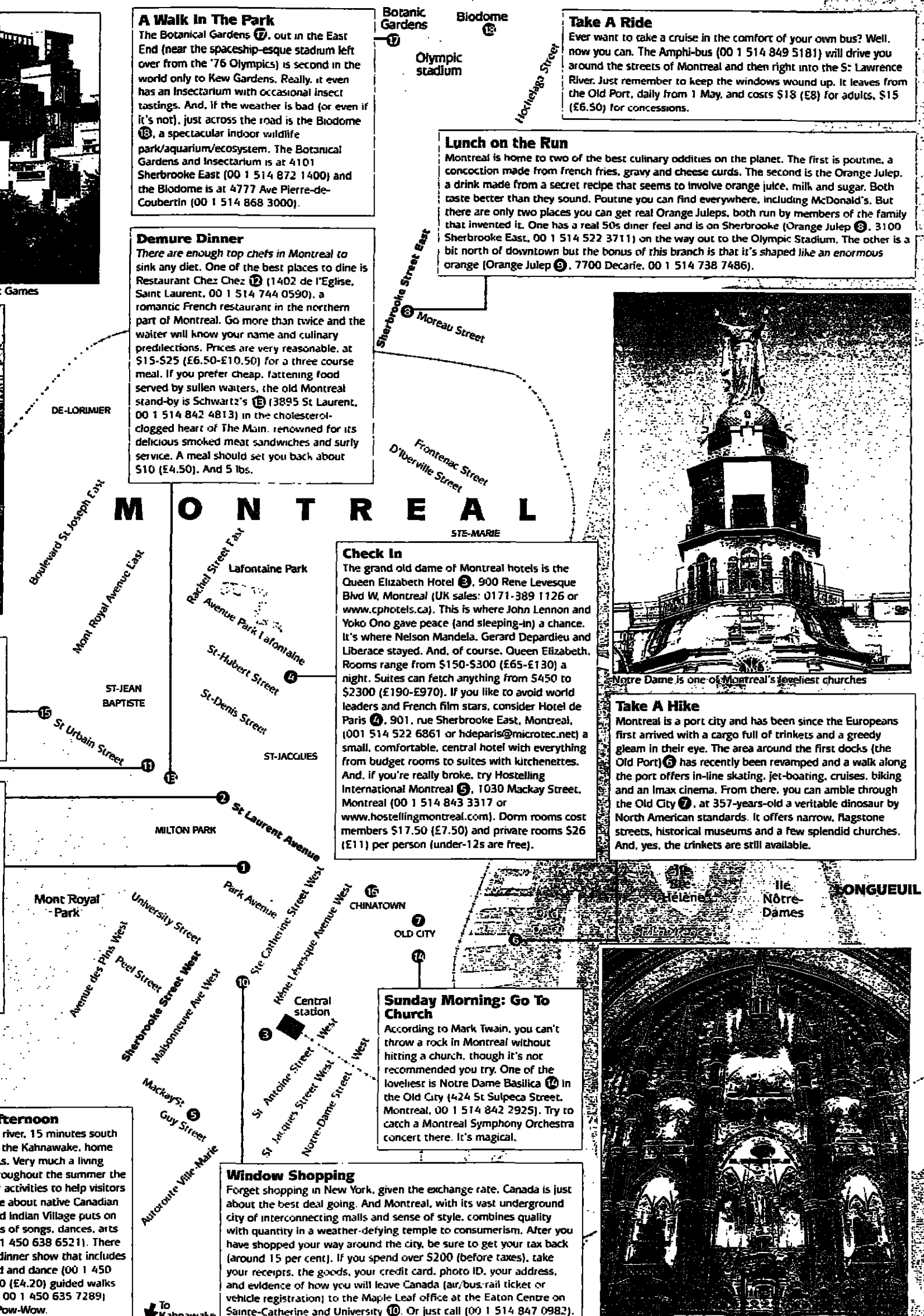
GRAPHIC: Kristina Ferris
PICTURES: Colour Library
Robert Harding
Adam

Icing On The Cake

Montreal is not so much cake and icing as bagels, cream cheese and lox; fresh, oven cooked bagels, creamy cream cheese and fresh smoked salmon. Whatever political problems exist in Quebec, Montreal is, by and large, just too cool a city to let them affect it. French, English, Greek, Haitian, and Tamil alike, can be found munching on bagels and letting a city-wide appreciation for the good things in life win out over more minor cultural differences. If only the politicians would eat more bagels...

Cultural Afternoon

Just across the river, 15 minutes south of Montreal, is the Kahnawake, home to the Mohawks. Very much a living community, throughout the summer the Mohawks offer activities to help visitors learn a bit more about native Canadian culture. The Old Indian Village puts on daily exhibitions of songs, dances, arts and crafts (00 1 450 638 6521). There is also a good dinner show that includes traditional food and dance (00 1 450 638 9699). \$10 (£4.20) guided walks (answerphone: 00 1 450 635 7289) and, in July, a Pow-Wow.



Check In

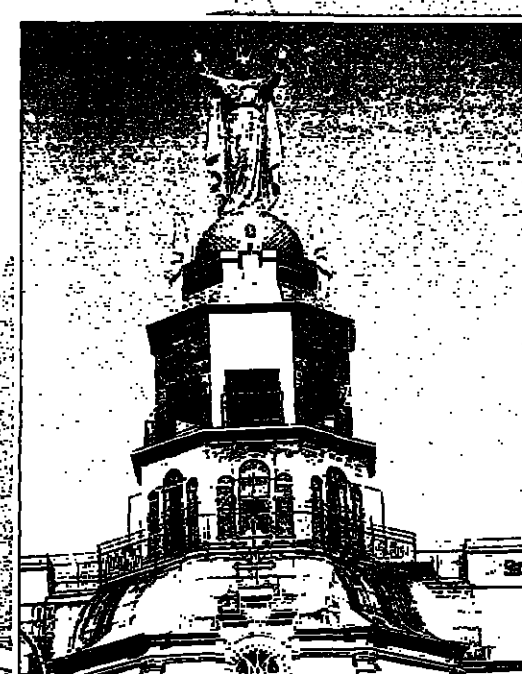
The grand old dame of Montreal hotels is the Queen Elizabeth Hotel (900 Rene Levesque Blvd W, Montreal (UK sales: 0171-389 1126 or www.qehotel.ca). This is where John Lennon and Yoko Ono gave peace (and sleeping-in) a chance. It's where Nelson Mandela, Gerard Depardieu and Liberace stayed. And, of course, Queen Elizabeth. Rooms range from \$150-\$300 (£65-£130) a night. Suites can fetch anything from \$450 to \$2300 (£190-£970). If you like to avoid world leaders and French film stars, consider Hotel de Paris (901, rue Sherbrooke East, Montreal, 001 514 522 6861 or hdeparis@microtec.net) a small, comfortable, central hotel with everything from budget rooms to suites with kitchens. And, if you're really broke, try Hostelling International Montreal (1030 Mackay Street, Montreal (00 1 514 843 3317 or www.hostellingmontreal.com). Dorm rooms cost members \$17.50 (£7.50) and private rooms \$26 (£11) per person (under-12s are free).

Sunday Morning: Go To Church

According to Mark Twain, you can't throw a rock in Montreal without hitting a church, though it's not recommended you try. One of the loveliest is Notre Dame Basilica (1) in the Old City (424 St. Sulpice Street, Montreal, 00 1 514 842 2925). Try to catch a Montreal Symphony Orchestra concert there. It's magical.

Window Shopping

Forget shopping in New York, given the exchange rate, Canada is just about the best deal going. And Montreal, with its vast underground city of interconnecting malls and sense of style, combines quality with quantity in a weather-defying temple to consumerism. After you have shopped your way around the city, be sure to get your tax back (around 15 per cent). If you spend over \$200 (before taxes), take your receipts, the goods, your credit card, photo ID, your address, and evidence of how you will leave Canada (air/bus/rail ticket or vehicle registration) to the Maple Leaf office at the Eaton Centre on Sainte-Catherine and University (10). Or just call (00 1 514 847 0982).



Take A Hike

Montreal is a port city and has been since the Europeans first arrived with a cargo full of trinkets and a greedy gleam in their eye. The area around the first docks (the Old Port) has recently been revamped and a walk along the port offers in-line skating, jet-boating, cruises, biking and an IMAX cinema. From there, you can amble through the Old City (7), at 357-years-old a veritable dinosaur by North American standards. It offers narrow, flagstone streets, historical museums and a few splendid churches. And, yes, the trinkets are still available.



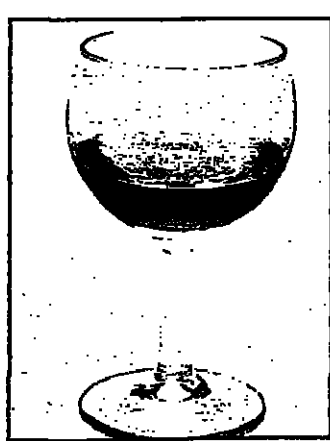
GLOBAL AGENDA

Speyside

The area to the north of Scotland's Grampian mountains has a particularly favourable climate for cultivating barley - it gets plenty of sunshine and little rainfall - and this has spawned a thriving whisky industry, with more than 50 distilleries churning out the country's national drink. The 1999 Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival is not only your chance to sample some of the produce in a four-day programme of tastings, but also to learn more about its creation and history from assembled experts. And if any member of your party is teetotal, there are plenty of other diversions on offer, such as cask-building, cookery demonstrations, a concert, a ceilidh and a tour of a cashmere mill. Various locations in Speyside (01343 550044) from Friday until 19 April.

Thailand

Although Thailand has long since adopted the Western practice of celebrating New Year on 1 January, the three-day festival of Songkran - a Sanskrit word meaning the beginning of the new solar year - is still celebrated. Songkran has its roots in the religious ritual bathing of family elders



and images of Buddha, though this has degenerated down the years into an excuse for huge water fights - no doubt partly prompted by this being the hottest season of the year. While you're dodging buckets of water, look out for stray birds and fish: another custom is releasing these back into the wild after buying them at market. Various locations in Thailand (00 66 77 281 828 88179) from Tuesday until Thursday.

Dublin

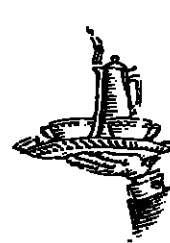
Bernardo Bertolucci, Fiona Shaw, Neil Jordan, Ian McKellen - these are just some of the luminaries lined up to make an appearance at the 14th Dublin Film Festival. Topped

and tailed by the world premieres of two Irish films - Cathal Black's *Love and Rage*, starring Greta Scacchi, and Deborah Warner's *The Last September*, starring Fiona Shaw and Michael Gambon - this year's festival is made up of five strands: Cinema Ireland, First Film Europe, Spirit of America, Europe in Focus: Spain and a documentary programme. There will also be seminars, a writing/directing masterclass with Mike Figgis and a special section devoted to images of disability on film. Various venues (00 353 1 679 2937) from Thursday until 25 April.

Vienna

Cuba - *Los mapas del deseo* ("maps of desire") aims to provide a unique insight into this often misunderstood country by contrasting the viewpoints of and the subjects chosen by a variety of artists. Through the exploration of their experiences of homosexuality, emigration, spirituality and feminism in relation to Cuba, the artists create a complex but revealing chronicle. Kunsthalle Wien, Museumsquartier, Vienna (00 43 1 531 9333) until 30 May, 60 schillings. SHARON GETTINGS

24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: PAVILION HOTEL, LONDON



IF NEXT year follows the same pattern as this, and you fancy sleeping alongside a clutch of models, you could do worse than book a room at The Pavilion Hotel during London Fashion Week. The place was practically booked out by the top model agencies during last February's Fashion Week, and each of the genetically blessed guests sashayed away with a designer goody bag (containing facial products, Nicky Clarke conditioner, Planet Organic jungle juice, Vivienne Westwood perfume and *Ministry Magazine*) to help them through a week of strenuous catwalking.

The concept behind the "boutique" (there are only 30 rooms) hotel is that people can indulge their glamorous side without paying correspondingly swanky prices - guests include pop stars (Jarvis Cocker, Skunk Anansie) and models (Karen Elson is a regular). The hotel's opulent decor is also often used as a film backdrop - so this could be your big chance.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

34-36 Sussex Gardens, London W2 1UL (tel: 0171-262 0905; fax: 0171-262 1324, e-mail: www.msi.com.uk/pavilion/).



About as central to London as you'd want to be, the hotel is within walking distance of Oxford Street and Queensway (for shopping and eating) and Hyde Park and Notting Hill (for space, the Serpentine Gallery and posing). Transport: If you don't want to risk suffocating your Manolos with unnecessary pavement-pounding, totter down to Edgware Road and jump on the nearest bus.

Edgware Road is also on the Bakerloo, Circle, District, and Hammersmith and City Tube lines, a five-minute walk away from the Central Line tube station at Lancaster Gate and about the same distance from Paddington station. If you're feeling really lazy, a taxi ride to Covent Garden costs about £8.

Time to an international airport: Paddington is also the departure point for the Heathrow Express, with terminals 1, 2 and 3 a very fast (15 minutes) but expensive (£10 one-way adults, free for children if booked in advance) journey away.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY?

Rooms here are music-hall-esque: loud, kitsch, over-the-top and upfront. Each room is themed (potted ferns in Casablanca Nights, beaded curtains in Honky Tonk Afro, four-wood panels and tartan in Highland Fling, and so on) and all are en suite. The emphasis is on fun and, although all the rooms are comfortable and well-equipped, bedrooms and shower-rooms (a few have baths) are on the small side.

Freebies: London Fashion Week is the time to stay if it's freebies you're after: each year the hotel comes up with a new idea for guests, from designer goody bags (see intro) to complimentary Indian head-massages. At other times, it's just the usual soap and shampoo.

What to book: The most popular room in the hotel is the art deco/Moorish-style Casablanca Nights, but choose your room with care: the bright colours and loud decorations may not be altogether conducive to a good night's sleep. Visit www.eol.net.uk/pavilion to preview the rooms - it will help you to make your choice. Keeping in touch: There are telephones and TVs in every room but no radios and no Internet access, and you'll have to visit reception if you need to send or receive a fax.

THE BOTTOM LINE Single rooms cost £60, double rooms £90. The price includes continental breakfast and this is delivered to your door - a big plus for anyone who doesn't feel they can face the world on an empty stomach. I'm not paying that: The Pavilion Hotel is offering readers of *The Independent* a 10 per cent discount when they book a room until 31 May. RHIANNON BATTEN

WEEKEND REVIEW
10 April 1999
FAX: 0171 293 2505

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

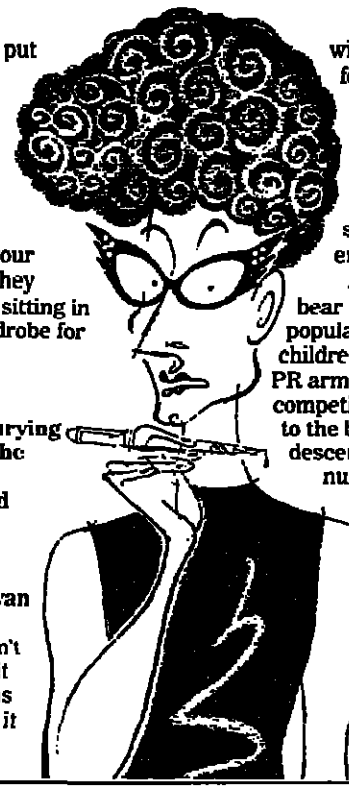
Dear Serena,
Young women wear such revealing clothes these days that I don't know what to do with my eyes. The other day, I glanced up as I was giving a lecture (I'm a college lecturer) and directly in front of me, about five feet away and right in my line of sight, was this enormous, curvaceous cleavage. Since it was so blatantly on display, does this mean that it is all right to look? Or should one look away? To look or not to look: that is the question. Advice, please.
Andrew, Pontypriid

It's funny how everyone goes on about the ill-controlled hormonal surges of the adolescent male, when most of the time they don't bat an eyelid at the half-naked wenches who surround them. Noticing scanty clothing on the young, meanwhile, is one of the first signs of ageing: the degree of nakedness in the streets is no greater now than in the Sixties, but each successive generation, once they've got their mortgages, continues to remark on the amount of

flesh on show among those younger than them.
Young women, however, still have the same schizophrenic attitude to their bodies as they have always had: they dress to stand out among their peers, but hate being singled out for it. Despite all the signs to the contrary, they don't want you to look. Avert your eyes and think of Teresa Gorman; it's the only way of avoiding getting a reputation, however unjust.
Besides, one should remember the old truism that women invariably put on a stone or so when they first leave home. The tops in question may have been perfectly decent a year ago, the wearers just haven't noticed the change in themselves. When the buttons finally give up the ghost under the strain, they will be brought, miserably, face to face with the reality of their own ageing.
Dear Serena,
I don't believe in pesticides, but the greenfly are already infesting my roses. What should I do?
Sheila, Kentish Town

Buy a hand squirter, put in a few shards of household soap, top up with warm water and shake until it's dissolved. Use half to spray on the infestation, and the remainder to wash your best party clothes. They have obviously been sitting in the back of that wardrobe for far too long.
Dear Serena,
I was thinking of burying a time capsule for the Millennium. Where should I bury it, and what would you recommend that I put in it?
Toby, Ballygowan

Whatever you do, don't think about burying it in a greenfield site, as the chances are that it



will be dug up to make way for a superstore by half-way through the coming century. Ever-decreasing ticket sales would suggest that the grounds of Althorp House might be a suitable spot: either that, or the environs of Sellafield.
As to contents, you should bear in mind that half the population, plus the producers of children's programmes and the PR arm of the government, will be competing with you in the run-up to the big day. As a result, our descendants will have any number of photos of political leaders, pictures of the Spice Girls, platform boots, etc. As everyone else will be vying to show what a sophisticated, caring society we are, I would advise concentrating on fitting in as many of modern science's more

ghastly developments, to try to give a more rounded picture. Try, for starters, a silicone breast implant; a photograph of one of those cats with no hair; a CD case; a copy of *The Sport*; a photograph of Jocelyn Wildenstein; a Planet Hollywood menu; a Marlene McCutcheon single; a Pot Noodle; a Body Shop White Musk scent spray; a picture of Canary Wharf; nylon underpants; the seating plan and inner dimensions of a Unijet plane; and Anchor canned spray cream.
I, too, am planting a Millennium box in my back garden, and would welcome suggestions from readers as to what to put in it. Suggestions to the usual address, with full contents to be disclosed later.
Dear Serena,
What will the spring bride be wearing this year? And what is the fashionable wedding present?
Polly, Nantwich

Seriously, Polly: there are support groups for this kind of thing.

Dear Serena,
My parents are rather old-fashioned and, despite the fact that we have been living together for two years, they insist that my partner and I have separate rooms when we go up to stay. I really resent this. How do I insist on sharing a room without alienating them?
Barney, Woolwich

As I'm sure they told you when you were a teenager, it's their house, and while you're in it you have to live by their rules. Life's really too short for you to be stewing about this sort of thing at your age; you should give in gracefully. If you've been living together for two years, it's not like you're going to be wanting to have sex or anything like that.
Knotty problems with the world today? Write to Dear Serena, The Independent, 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL, where they will be treated with the customary sympathy



ARIES

AS THERE'S less to get you up, you'll be better off in bed (but only for recuperation or reproduction - not recreation). However, you more than anyone else in the zodiac are able to rise above your astrology and breathe the air that only existential maniacs can survive in - so concentrate on your biology and reject the past that seems to dominate your present. Your future has been receding almost mischievously and it requires you to seize it.



TAURUS

YOU MAY suffer from errors of taste as Venus tricks you into platform soles or plastic shirts with fish swimming in them. Conceit will be a problem for you, but your mind will be on deeper things. As you listen to your subconscious, decisions will be made for you. You may feel abandoned as Venus (that slapper) moves into Gemini, but at least you can make yourself understood (that's not always a good thing, considering what you have to say).



GEMINI

IT'S NICE that Venus has moved into your neighbourhood - now you can choose who you want and how. Your urge to become friends with everyone increases your chances of being bent triple round the bedroom furniture, and this is good insofar as it considerably increases your social repertoire and makes your limbic system light up like lasers. You can trust passion but equally, you may have to throw the match in the powder keg first.



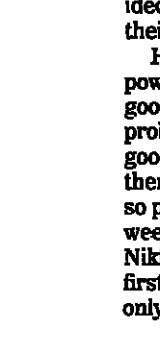
CANCER

AS THE most attractive sign of the zodiac you might legitimately wonder why you aren't more popular. You have been taking such an interest in people and having such convincing intuitions about them that you've been carried away with your cleverness. You've created characters for them that they don't always recognise. And when they do recognise them they don't like them. Your sympathy should be kept in check this week. Your nurturing heart itself needs nurturing.



LEO

THERE IS a sense of danger as well as opportunity when your glorious Sun is like this with Pluto of the underworld. The answers you need are often conceived in the dark (you don't like it there because no one can see enough to admire you properly). But if you can make the journey into the interior you will emerge with rare knowledge. You are inclined to scatter rather than hoard, but try and curb your generosity. Leave sermons and soda water for others.



VIRGO

YOUR INABILITY to break free from the past (you call it loyalty) is thought to be one of your most attractive qualities (frankly there isn't much competition for the title). But your old friends, ex-lovers, past spouses, oh and that family of yours - even though they are acting with the best of intentions - extract a toll for their support. If you wanted to be free you could easily pull it off (though your veins might collapse in the attempt).



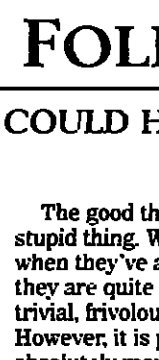
LIBRA

ROMANCE IS what you're good at, and this trine with Neptune reveals you at your apogee. Your hands emerge from underneath your victim's clothes and this baffles them, the more so as they really are trying to resist. They believe they are fated, and they are right. There is a genius about you, you are irresistible - but only in making love, not money. When you are frank about the true shape of your desires, you are at your most potent.



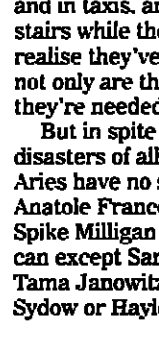
SCORPIO

THOUGH PLUTO is retrograde you should be ready to experience a flash of your old magic: be careful not to let it express itself in an ugly, negative and destructive way - unless it would be obviously useful to do so. The energy may be expressed through the body (you go demon lover, although not with your regular partner), or through the mind (it puts you on a higher plane of consciousness - and this will be absolutely fatal for your career).



SAGITTARIUS

JUPITER GETS on the wrong side of Venus, and thus your appetite for idle luxury has never been sharper (this will require money), and your ability to confound your colleagues with vicious politeness is pronounced. Your looks become more important to you than they should be. But now people will be looking behind your cosmetic creativity to see what else there is on offer. Conceit is a particular problem for Sagittarius, if only because you have much to be conceited about.



CAPRICORN

POOR CAPRICORN! Saturn's square with the moon may cause a melancholia to settle on you like a meteorological depression. It's only the past claiming you for its own (only). Take more seriously your relationship with your mother; it's probably all her fault. Life may not improve this week, but you do have a capacity for work (at least you always have had) and this will save you. Fortitude deserves admiration - and you have become better-looking recently.



AQUARIUS

THE SUDDEN insights the moon gives you will make your settled relationship more difficult than before. But however much ignorance is necessary for bliss, knowledge is necessary for happiness. You find it difficult letting go of the past but more than ever you want to incorporate your past with your present. Clever ways of taking advantage of the moment will help your finances. You are startling, exciting, imaginative - but not kind. That's what makes you successful.



PISCES

UNUSUAL ROMANCE is indicated by a favourable aspect between Venus and Neptune. For that to register with you, it'll have to be a very unusual romance (there's a double Pisces thing about these planets). So you may find yourself upside down round the bedposts. Maybe your partner will suffer from a disability (being a man, for example). The danger is you'll give so much a) there'll be nothing left of you, and b) your partner will find your generosity disgusting.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON
FRANK REYNOLDS



Doctor: "What did you operate on Jones for?"
Surgeon: "A hundred pounds."
Doctor: "No, I mean what had he got?"
Surgeon: "A hundred pounds."

FRANK REYNOLDS'S vigour, mastery of character and easy sense of style impress forcefully today, 46 years after his death, despite the radically different shorthand convention of the modern cartoon. Vigorous too, once the reading of stage dialogue is accepted, is the quality of his humour. In 1920, after 14 years of supplying social cartoons to *Punch*, Reynolds became its art editor, taking over from FH Townsend, his brother-in-law.

Ten years later, a nervous breakdown caused him to abandon drawing for several years. Reynolds's naturalistic style is a legacy of Victorian wood-engraving tradition, but we can see in it the origins of the modern cartoon. In Reynolds's obituary, cartoonist Kenneth Bird (Fougasse) said: "His line possessed a freedom and energy which make us recognise it now as the forerunner of much of the free-style drawing of today."

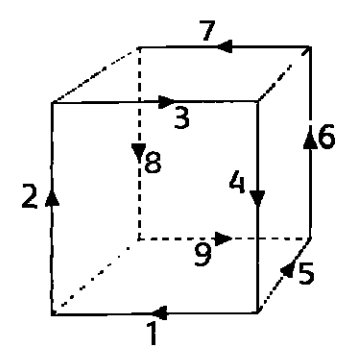


THE SECOND series of Radio 4's *Puzzle Panel* is over; it's been declared a success and I have signed up for a third series in the autumn. Time to turn to the Aугean backlog of correspondence. The last two *Puzzlemaster* columns, on Kosovo, have drawn a huge and thoughtful response with only one dissenter.

As usual, it is the one out of step that is most telling; the one swimming against the tide of my own thoughts that throws them into sharpest relief. Besides, if we all thought the same, what would we talk about?

What, to paraphrase the e-mail, has Kosovo to do with puzzle-writing? What, as my father would have said, has honey-cake to do with a windmill?

Well, firstly I am human with human interests. *Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto*, as Terence put it. I've found it psychologically difficult to square it with myself, fiddling about in the foothills of the intellect while enormities are happening in Europe. Secondly, I am one of the many being asked by our elected Government to give the moral rubber-stamp to Nato's strategies; and, finally, I am one of those whose charity is dependably sought to sort it out when it inevitably goes pear-shaped.



Thirdly, and more centrally, puzzles would lose much of their appeal for me if they taught nothing; if they were incapable of generalisation to "big boy" problems; if they did not facilitate the transfer of skills to other areas of mental endeavour. Spotting the bad mental habits of our elected leaders is not just a game. It is a serious game. It offers object lessons not just in how not to think, but also in how not to vote. If we cannot solve a local and perennial problem recurring throughout history (nowadays followed by beatings about ensuring this sort of thing never happens again), what hope

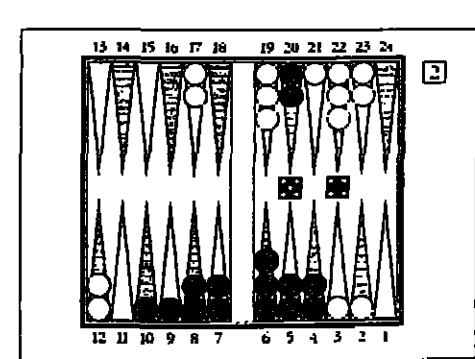
is there of solving problems with no track record, such as global warming, overpopulation, loss of biodiversity, genetic tampering? We have to change the way we think. Lead on, MacMaslanka!

Points to ponder
1 Families stop having children after their first boy. Boys and girls are equiprobable and multiple births are impossible. Will this affect the ratio of sexes? What will the average number of children be in a family?
2 How many distinguishable cubes can be made by painting each face either white or black?
3 Find a one-word anagram of IMPLACABLE ROT.

Solutions to last week's problems
1 (see diagram) The fly walks, at most, 9cm. Let each edge traversal be marked by an arrow with two ends (•). Three arrows can only meet at the start or finish. The remaining 6 corners can have, at most, 2 arrows each. This makes 6 corners with two half-arrows, and two corners with three half-arrows, making 9 arrows and so 9 edges traversed.
2 Two boys and 2 girls is more likely than a boy and three girls.
3 TYPE A PHRASE = HAPPY EASTER.
Comments to: indya@puzzlemaster.co.uk

BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



IN THE box sat the Enigmatic Englishman (EE). In the opposing team were Barry Bigplay (BB), the captain, and the Prophylactic Pole (PP). They discussed the play of black's 54. "We're winning comfortably," said PP, "no need for any excitement. I think we should play 10/5, 9/5. Obviously we can't play 8/3, 7/3 as that would leave four blots - far too dangerous." "I must disagree," countered BB, "now is exactly the moment for a big play. Four blots there may be after 8/3, 7/3 but EE would have only eight numbers to hit one of the blots, and even then we would get a lot of return shots. Look at the potential for the blots. Look at the potential for winning a gammon if EE fails to

enter. I'm sorry, PP but I must play 8/3, 7/3." "I haven't voluntarily left four blots since LL (Lord Lucan) stopped playing - but if you must, you must," said PP resignedly. EE inwardly groaned. It was obvious to him that pointing was the correct play and the one he feared most. Sadly for him it was BB who was the captain and not PE a few rolls later EE duly lost a gammon. Later that evening he put the position into Snowie and discovered that 8/3, 7/3 was correct by the huge margin of 3 per cent. In fact any hitting move was better than the pusillanimous 10/5, 9/5. That old backgammon adage: "To the aggressor the spoils" had been proven once again.

SUNDAY TELEVISION & RADIO

BBC1

6.40 Teletubbies (4172527). **7.20** Match of the Day (843904). **8.30** Breakfast with Frost (92275). **9.30** Heaven and Earth (33782). **10.30** Ballyvaughan (263841). **11.20** Gardeners' World Take Two (525956). **11.30** Country File (4701). **12.00** News (8349324). **12.05** Turning Points (934895). **12.30** Jobs for the Girls (1670430). **1.00** EastEnders (743140). **2.25** Are You Being Served? (5168695). **2.55** All along the Watchtower (2175966).

3.25 Sunday Grandstand Rugby Union: Wales vs England. John Inverdale introduces live coverage of the Five Nations clash from Wembley. Commentary by Bill McLaren and Eddie Butler (S) (T) (46670492).

6.00 News: Weather (T) (548943).

6.20 Local News: Weather (711633).

6.25 Songs of Praise. From Boston in Lincolnshire (S) (T) (973053).

7.00 FILM Sabrina (Sydney Pollack 1995 US). Julia Ormond is the Long Island Cinderella, played by Audrey Hepburn in the Billy Wilder original. She's the chauffeur's daughter caught between serious businessman older brother Harrison Ford (too stodgy in the role) and feckless charmer of younger bro' (Greg Kinnear). Wilder's 1954 original was no great shakes, and this isn't really that much better (S) (T) (71324).

9.00 The 51st British Academy Film Awards with Jonathan Ross. From the Business Design Centre in Islington, introduced by Ross. A sort of domestic rerun of the Oscars, with more or less the same movies and actors in contention. Plus, a special tribute to Alfred Hitchcock on the 100th anniversary of his birth (S) (T) (1237).

10.30 News: Weather (T) (507701).

10.45 Hillsborough - the Legacy: Everyman Special. Explores the lasting impact of the Hillsborough stadium disaster (S) (671695).

11.35 Harbour Lights (S) (T) (726904).

12.25 FILM Butterfield 8 (Daniel Mann 1960 US). Cal-girl Elizabeth Taylor looks for Mr Right in this garish adaptation of the John O'Hara novel. Laurence Harvey co-stars (Then Weather) (T) (687763). To 2.15am.

BBC2

8.30 The Busy World of Richard Scarry (706546). **8.55 A Monster Holiday** (824727). **9.25 Gadget Boy** (706127). **9.55 The Wayne Manifesto** (706527). **10.20 Sweet Valley High** (165489). **10.40 Film: Johnny High** (173072). **12.00 O Zone** (780072). **12.15 Lee and Herring's This Morning** with Richard, Not Judy (502485). **1.00 Storyville: Jerusalem** (64695).

2.30 FILM The Desert Song (Bruce Humberstone 1953 UK). Signum Romberg's operetta (78849633).

4.20 FILM The Quiet Man (John Ford 1952 US). American boxer John Wayne returns to Galway and woos Maureen O'Hara (T) (85532327).

6.25 Star Trek: Voyager. An attack on Voyager interrupts Janeway's holodeck programme (S) (T) (614899).

7.10 Cold War. "Soldiers of God 1979-83." The Cold War story continues with US conflict with the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and the Soviet entanglement in Afghanistan - Russia's Vietnam (S) (T) (400053).

8.00 The Natural World. Tim Pigott-Smith narrates this look at the flora and fauna of the Isles of Scilly (S) (T) (808430).

8.50 Vintner's Tales (S) (735053).

9.00 Golf - the Masters. Steve Rider introduces live coverage of the conclusion of this year's Masters from Atlanta, Georgia. Who will be presented with the coveted Green Jacket? The commentators are Peter Alliss, Alex Hay and Howard Clark (S) (675091).

12.00 CHOICE Demon Seed (Donald Cammell 1977 US). Sci-fi thriller starring Julie Christie. See *Film of the Day*, below (54225).

2.00 BBC Learning Zone: GCSE Bitesize Revision: Geography 1 (54893). **4.00 Languages: Get By in German** (16193). To 5am.

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (18614). **8.00 Digg** (3506256). **9.25 Hey Arnold!** (7067701). **9.50 Animal Ark** (7083782). **10.15 Power Rangers** (397512). **10.40 Oggy and the Cockroaches** (8543904). **11.00 Sunday Morning** (74411). **12.00 The Rock That Rolled Away** (7459). **12.30 CrossTalk** (95343). **1.00 Jonathan Dimbleby** (90888). **2.00 Murray and Martin's F1 Special** (1879).

2.30 The Big Match: Newcastle vs Tottenham Hotspur. Live coverage from old Trafford (kick-off 3pm) of the FA Cup semi-final (T) (743053).

5.30 F1: Brazilian Grand Prix Live. Jim Rosenthal introduces live coverage of the Brazilian Grand Prix from Interlagos. With commentary by Murray Walker and Martin Brundle, studio analysis by Tony Jardine, and pit-lane reports from James Allen and Louise Goodman (S) (18740633).

8.45 London Tonight (T) (483053).

8.20 ITV News: Weather (T) (404540).

8.30 Coronation Street. Mike has a secret liaison (S) (T) (2850).

9.00 CHOICE Rhinoceros. Robson Green and Niamh Cusack star in this one-off romantic drama. See *Drama of the Day*, below (S) (T) (6411).

11.00 ITV News: Weather (T) (858072).

11.15 F1: Brazilian Grand Prix Highlights (65707). **12.20 Still in Bed with McDiarmid** (898233). **12.50 Film: 1969** (729473). **2.35 Club@Vision** (728363). **3.45 Jonathan Dimbleby** (843402). **4.00 Cybernet** (50496). **4.30 ITV Nightscreen** (97744). To 5.30am.

Channel 4

6.20 Magic Roundabout (2581071). **6.25** Hor the Engine (393512). **6.30** The Changers (706188). **6.40 Bagpuss** (737196). **7.00 Salsbury's Lighthouse** (84898). **7.30 Bug Alert** (803987). **7.55 Insektors** (836343). **8.45 Saved by the Bell** (608898). **8.45 City Guys** (979618). **9.30 Catdog** (830463). **9.45 Planet Pop** (748309). **10.00 The Waltons** (9287). **11.00 Holyoaks** (1578072). **12.10 Dawson's Creek** (198237). **12.30 Doors to Manual** (2234633). **1.45 Brussels - Behind Closed Doors** (77256). **2.45 Football Italia** (2182-966). **5.00 Travelog Treks** (236121).

5.25 FILM Aces High (Jack Gold 1976 UK). RG Sherriff's Great War play *Journey's End*, transposed to the aerial dog fights over the trenches. Malcolm McDowell, Christopher Plummer, Simon Ward and Peter Firth play the officer class fighter aces (2696099).

7.30 The Establishment. Nick Danziger meets Sir Michael Aitken, Master of Trinity College (324).

8.00 CHOICE The Real James Goldsmith. The controversial self-made billionaire analysed. See *Profile of the Day*, below (T) (1986).

9.00 FILM Nuns on the Run (Jonathan Lynn 1990 UK). Silly, sub-A *Fish Called Wanda*-style farce, not really harnessing the talents of its two stars, Eric Idle and Robbie Coltrane. They play the petty criminals who take refuge from a Triad gang by donning gowns and wimples (T) (50166332).

10.45 Motorbike Madness. The Isle of Man motorcycle race (7589895).

11.50 The 11 O'Clock Show (333343). **12.40 Babylon 5** (1354880). **1.35 Dark Skies** (T) (6628912). **2.25 For the Love Of** (R) (S) (2256454). **3.20 Hell, Texas, Home** (8292029).

3.50 FILM Ju Dou (Zhang Yimou 1990 Ch/Un). Oscar-nominated rural tragedy (S) (3542454). To 5.25am.

Channel 5

6.30 Not Property (4078904). **7.00** Dappledown Farm (2715633). **7.30** Milk-shake! (250309). **7.35 Wipeout House** (4922169). **8.05 From Jesus to Christ** (8548546). **9.00 Stickit Around** (837168). **9.30 Sister Slade** (823427). **10.00 Mirror, Mirror** (4003256). **11.00** USA High (1948237). **11.30 Singled Out** (947966). **12.00 My Story** (871734). **12.30 Inside Out** (468483). **1.00 Anything Possible** (3135362). **1.30 News** (2729302). **1.20 Frostup on Sunday** (S) (3194088). **1.50 Movie Chart Show** (3681053). **2.20 Exclusive** (7033468). **2.50 Family Affairs Omnibus** (4754914). **5.00 Serious Money** (8604627).

5.35 FILM A Far Off Place (Mikael Salomon 1993 US). Impressively photographed widescreen Disney film based on two books by Laurens van der Post. When their parents are murdered by poachers, two teenagers face a daunting trek across the Kalahari desert (T) (16835483).

7.30 5 News and Sport (S) (T) (809237).

8.00 Ascension Island - Life on a Volcano. Ascension Island was a remote Atlantic volcanic peak until the Falklands war turned it into a communications base. This film explores the effects of the military build-up on the wildlife (8203904).

9.00 FILM Taking Care of Business (Arthur Hiller 1990 US). Interesting stars, but a tired idea (*Trading Places* by other means basically), this is a late entry in the yuppie nightmare cycle. James Belushi is jovial petty-thief who finds the Filofax, contacts book and credit cards of uptight businessman Charles Grodin, who is left stranded on the mean streets of LA (T) (9206091).

11.00 Water Rats (S) (512089).

11.55 The Comedy Network (881256). **12.25 Major League Baseball** (S) (4834738). **4.40 You Again?** (R) (94497164). **5.05 Move On Up** (R) (88324873). **5.30 Serious Money** (R) (S) (680367). To 6am.

ITV/Regions

BBC1 Scotland

As BBC1 except: **11.30** Landward (4701). **10.45 Sportsweek - Match of the Day** (282237). **11.30 Hillsborough - the Legacy: Everyman Special.** Hazel Irvine introduces highlights of St Johnstone v Rangers. **11.30** Parkhead. Commentary by Rob Maclean. (727633). **12.30** Harbour Lights (619183). **1.45** John's BBC News 24 (4389198).

Anglia **As LWT except:** **12.30** Anglia News (198345). **12.30** Central Newsweek (3440635). **12.55** Central News (1817072). **8.35** Central News and Sport (483053). **4.00** Jobline (8589).

HTV Wales **As LWT except:** **12.00** The Rock That Rolled Away. Tom Morton begins a personal journey that explores the relationship between rock music and religious faith, including Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and even Satanism. This week's programme features interviews with Yusuf Islam (better known as Cat Stevens), Charlie Giffitt and Stan Spence, with performances by PPR and Stuart Patten. All Stars. (714625). **12.25** Soccer Sunday (493402). **12.55** HTV News and Weather (1817072). **2.00** Weather (8349324). **4.30** News and Weather (483053). **4.30** News and Weather (483053). **5.00** Coronation Street (5560).

HTV West **As HTV Wales except:** **12.25** West Match Plus (483402). **2.00** Hope and Gloria (1879).

Meridian **As LWT except:** **12.30** 7 Days (24523). **12.50** Meridian News and Weather (7885879). **2.00** The Making of Arlington Road (1879). **8.45** Meridian Tonight (483053). **4.30** Soundtrack (8361183). **4.50** ITV Nightscreen (7471880). **5.00** Coronation Street (5560).

Westcountry **As LWT except:** **10.45** Cartoons (198345). **10.50** Upbeat (1879). **12.30** Westcountry Weekend Match (85343). **2.00** Murray and Martin's F1 Preview (1879). **8.45** Westcountry Tonight (483053). **4.30** Soundtrack (8361183). **4.50** ITV Nightscreen (7471880). **5.00** Coronation Street (5560).

Yorkshire **As LWT except:** **12.30** Goals on Sunday (85343). **2.00** Calendar News and Weather (8674904). **2.05** Murray and Martin's F1 Special (1817072). **8.45** Calendar News and Sport (483053). **12.50** Cybernet (173003). **1.25** Film: Dushman Duniya Ka. Tragic tangled tale in which a talented young man falls victim to the evil drugs. The inappropriately named Lucky is led by all who know him, but despite a beautiful girlfriend and loving parents (left in with the wrong crowd and becomes addicted to hard drugs. Can those who love him persuade Lucky to kick the habit? (899947). **4.45** Jobline (849222).

Tyne Tees **As Yorkshire except:** **12.30** Newsweek (95343). **2.00** North East News (8974904). **8.45** North East News and Sport (483053).

S4C **As Channel 4 except:** **11.00** T4: Holyoaks (8031948). **12.05** Round a Round: Omnibus (8409158). **12.40** Pam Fi Duv? (8409158). **1.40** Goggy (3768383). **1.45** Gog (7419594). **2.30** Fflemio (89388459). **3.00** Maniffestio (4761081). **3.30** Hygi: Penarth (89388459). **3.45** Penarth 1999 (5732256). **5.00** Newyddion (7010179). **6.05** Poffi y Cwm (18187782). **8.00** Ddraig Cwn Ddraig (89388459). **8.30** Llyfrs Oed (89388459). **10.05** Newyddion (78322188). **10.20** Film: Ffurfwr Dogs (86284482). **12.15** Film: City on Fire (3325102). **2.15** Close.

PROFILE OF THE DAY

THE REAL JAMES GOLDSMITH (8pm C4) One can apparently tell a lot about a man by the company he keeps - and Sir James Goldsmith (Harold Wilson had him knighted, for services against *Private Eye*) kept the company of John Aspinall, Paul Johnson and Taki, all of whom speak here about the founder of business empires and lost causes like *Now!* and the Referendum Party.



DRAMA OF THE DAY

RHINOCEROS (9pm ITV) Robson Green, in a familiar lovable rogue guise, joins former *Heartbeat* sweetheart Niamh Cusack in this romantic drama written by Christopher Green. Based on a true story, Green and Cusack play the estranged couple whose son has learning disabilities and goes missing during a train journey to visit his mother. The ensuing search brings them back together again.



FILM OF THE DAY

DEMON SEED (12pm BBC2) This was only a back directing gig for that wayward genius, Donald Cammell, the man responsible for the 1960s classic, *Performance*. He still managed to imbue the otherwise preposterous story of a housewife (Julie Christie) terrorised (and impregnated) by her husband's self-aware home computer, with whatever style it does possess.



RADIO

Radio 1 (875-998MHz FM) **6.30** Kevin Greening. **10.00** Mark Goodier's Radio 1 Request Show. **1.00** James Thrall's Sunday Breakfast. **3.00** Top of the Pops. **4.00** The Official UK Top 40. **7.00** Radio 1's Dance Anthems with Dave Pearce. **10.00** Trevor Nelson. **12.00** Emma B. **4.00 - 6.30** Scott Mills. **Radio 2** (88-90.2MHz FM) **7.00** Don Maclean. **9.05** Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs. **11.00** Parkinson's Sunday Supplement. **1.00** Desmond Carrington. **3.00** Russell Davies. **4.00** Fred Astaire: Step by Step. **4.30** Sine. **5.00** Something Simple. **5.30** Pam Ayres. **7.00** Hugh Scully. **8.30** Sunday Half Hour. **9.00** Alan Keith. **10.00** Malcolm Laycock. **11.00** The David Jacobs Collection. **12.00** Katrina Leskanen. **3.00 - 4.00** Alex Lester. **Radio 3** (90.2-92.4MHz FM) **6.00** On Air. **9.00** Ewan Kay's Sunday Morning. **11.00** Artist of the Week Encore. **12.15** Music Matters. **1.00** The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. **2.45** Glorious John. **4.00** 100 Great Singers. **4.30** Centurions. **4.30** The Year. **8.45** Sunday Feature: The Rise and Fall of English. **6.30** Private Passions. **7.30** Sunday Play: The Glass Menagerie. Tennessee Williams' semi-autobiographical memory play revolves around a mother's struggle to find a gentleman caller for her crippled and emotionally vulnerable daughter. With Julie Harris, Calista Flockhart and John Goodman. **9.25** Prokofiev. Piano Sonata No. 7. Maurizio Pollini. **9.45** Chor Works. Brian Kay introduces a selection of choral works to celebrate spring. Haydn: Spring (The Seasons). Barbara Bonney (soprano), Anthony Rolfe Johnson (baritone), Andreas Schmidt (baritone). **10.00** Dance Anthems with Dave Pearce. **10.00** Trevor Nelson. **12.00** Emma B. **4.00 - 6.30** Scott Mills. **Radio 4** (92.4-94.4MHz FM) **7.00** Don Maclean. **9.05** Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs. **11.00** Parkinson's Sunday Supplement. **1.00** Desmond Carrington. **3.00** Russell Davies. **4.00** Fred Astaire: Step by Step. **4.30** Sine. **5.00** Something Simple. **5.30** Pam Ayres. **7.00** Hugh Scully. **8.30** Sunday Half Hour. **9.00** Alan Keith. **10.00** Malcolm Laycock. **11.00** The David Jacobs Collection. **12.00** Katrina Leskanen. **3.00 - 4.00** Alex Lester. **Radio 5** (90.2-92.4MHz FM) **6.00** On Air. **9.00** Ewan Kay's Sunday Morning. **11.00** Artist of the Week Encore. **12.15** Music Matters. **1.00** The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert. **2.45** Glorious John. **4.00** 100 Great Singers. **4.30** Centurions. **4.30** The Year. **8.45** Sunday Feature: The Rise and Fall of English. **6.30** Private Passions. **7.30** Sunday Play: The Glass Menagerie. 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SATURDAY TELEVISION

THE WEEKEND REVIEW
The Independent 10 April 1999

JASPER REES
TELEVISION REVIEW



AT THE end of Walden on Villains (BBC2), the head and shoulders of Brian Walden faded to black, to be replaced by the head and shoulders of Adolf Hitler. I'm sure they were striving for an altogether grander effect - to suggest that the charisma and intellect of Walden are a match for any Hitler. I wonder whether his introductory subject wasn't also a warning that evil is complete with a scowl round Hitler. In the same way that no Hitler of Paris is complete without a trip up the Eiffel Tower - I'm expecting greater novelty with his pieces on Saddam Hussein and Nero. Walden battled hard to insist that he had found new things to say about Hitler. His career raised questions that are "insufficiently discussed". His relevance isn't something that's often mentioned, but it ought to be. He concluded with a terrible shudder of the joys that modern democracies are as inclined to make a god of the shogun as they were in Nazi Germany. Does this mean that Walden didn't see the Nazis? The series was even subtitled 'A Warning From History', and was broadcast to universal acclaim not once but twice on the self-same channel. You can't be more satirically disenchanted than that.

Sticon, like the Third Reich, has been sufficiently discussed. Laughter in the House (BBC1), which concluded with the 1980s and 1990s, dressed up an orgy of clips as a P.D. on trends in humour. Some of the shows discussed were repeated this week, as they seem to be most weeks. The unconfident scheduling - two parts on Wednesdays and one on Friday - perhaps hints at the extraordinary of all the tyrants. Today, as the tyrants of genocide and aggression continue to put old wine in new bottles.

MOTOWN LIVE.

This new series, exclusive to UK Arena, features live performances from USA's hottest R'n B acts and celebrates the Motown legend with some of the labels most renowned talent. Tonight's guests include Kirk Franklin, Al Green and Yolanda Adams.

Tonight 6.10pm
UK ARENA

BBC1

- 7.00 The Munsters (R) (0944789). 7.25 News: Weather (087954).
- 7.30 Children's BBC: Fireman Sam (R) (089629), 7.45 Little Monsters (R) (084487), 7.50 The Incredible Hulk and She-Hulk (S) (089629), 8.10 The Silver Surfer (S) (084038), 8.25 The Flintstones (R) (S) (089430), 8.50 Live and Kicking (S) (073772).
- 12.00 News: Weather (R) (040932).
- 12.25 Grandstand: Introduced by Des Lynam from Aintree (085038). 1.30 Football Focus (078889), 1.05 Grandstand: Goals to the Grand National (073432), 1.55 Grand National Build-Up (084584), 3.45 The 1998 Grand National (085038), 4.10 The Re-Run (084584), 4.25 Rugby Union: France vs Scotland. Highlights of the Five Nations match, which can be seen live on BBC2 (kick-off 2.15pm) (084738), 4.45 Final Score (076720).
- 5.30 News: Weather (R) (025478), 5.40 Regional News: Weather (027569).
- 5.45 Children's BBC: Families at War. Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer present a kind of update of The Generation Game. Sort of. See Game Show of the Day, below (S) (089688).
- 6.30 Big Break: You've been snowed out with Jim Davidson and wackoed out with Mark Davis. Tony Knowles and Jimmy White (S) (0725).
- 7.00 Whatever You Want: Gaby Roslin likes it for three Georges who want to blow up a tower block, three youngsters who want to go bug-hunting in Belize, and three aspiring whole watchmen (S) (040720).
- 7.50 The National Lottery - We've Got Your Number: Brian Conley hosts the big-money balls programme (S) (083332).
- 8.15 City Central: Gilly drama about northern coppers. The uniform team suspect that Colin has found a small gift, but when Richard speculates that it might be a boyfriend, the team decide to stake out Colin's house. Nice to see them busy solving crime (S) (043823).
- 8.55 Jonathan Creek: The first episode in a re-run of the second series of David Renwick's detective stories, starring Caroline Quentin's crime writer and Alan Davies' magicians assistant. This week, a best-selling writer of horror stories is murdered (R) (S) (083590).
- 9.55 Birds of a Feather (R) (S) (0740836).
- 10.25 News: Weather (R) (060720).
- 10.40 Match of the Day: Ray Stubbs, with Alan Hansen and Mark Lawrenson, introduces the best of the action from the Premier League, including extended highlights of Aston Villa vs Southampton (S) (0776452).
- 11.50 Grand National Review: Jump-by-jump re-run of this afternoon's big race (S) (0776452).
- 12.15 Grandstand: The Long Goodbye (Robert Altman 1973 US). Elliot Gould is a Philip Marlowe for the early 1970s in the excellent Charles Chaplin adaptation. See Film of the Day, below (Then Watch) (0776452).
- 2.05 Top of the Pops (S) (0776452).
- 2.35 John Peel News 24 (043904). To 6.45am.

BBC2

- 6.00 Open University: The Emergence of Greek Mathematics (R) (072800), 6.25 The Third Revolution (060720), 7.00 Euphoric Green and Revolution (060720), 7.20 The British Family: Sources and Origins (R) (04383), 8.00 Weekend 24 (S) (089688), 8.25 The Long Goodbye (Robert Altman 1973 US). Elliot Gould is a Philip Marlowe for the early 1970s in the excellent Charles Chaplin adaptation. See Film of the Day, below (Then Watch) (0776452).
- 11.50 Food and Drink (R) (084732).
- 12.20 The Naked Spur (Anthony Mann 1953 US). Top-notch western which sees bounty hunter James Stewart tracking killer Robert Ryan and girlfriend Janet Leigh across the Rockies (0776452).
- 1.50 Britishate Britain (S) (073558).
- 2.00 Rugby Union: France vs Scotland. Live coverage of the Five Nations clash from Paris (kick-off 2.15pm). John Inverdale presents (S) (073558).
- 4.05 TOTP 2 (S) (0776452).
- 4.50 The Dunkirk (Leslie Norman 1958 UK). The British army's miraculous escape from the beaches of northern France in June 1940 - or not so miraculous, maybe, as Hitler apparently didn't want to humiliate us. But that is historical revisionism, and this movie reconstruction, directed by Leslie Norman - Barry's dad - certainly doesn't see it that way. John Mills, Bernard Lee and Richard Attenborough lead the entirely predictable cast (089403).
- 7.00 News and Sport: Weather (R) (080316).
- 7.15 The Correspondent: Dead Kid Walking. Edward Sturton reports on how the United States remains the only country in the western world that executes killers for crimes they committed when they were teenagers. See Documentary of the Day, below (S) (080316).
- 8.00 Steps and Son: The offer of a two piano turns out to be more trouble than its worth (R) (07720).
- 8.30 Golf - The Masters: Shane Rider introduces live coverage of day three from the Augusta National course in Georgia. Commentator John Peter Allen, Alex Hay, Howard Clark and Dougie Donnelly (S) (07720).
- 10.50 News: Weather (R) (080316).
- 11.50 The Return of the Musketeers (Richard Lester 1989 UK/F/S). It was during the making of this movie that Roy Kinnear fell from a horse and died. It's a rather detailed retelling of a series that began in 1973, with the same leading cast of Michael York (D'Artagnan), Oliver Reed (Athos), Frank Finlay (Porthos) and Richard Chamberlain (Aramis). They're all looking a bit portly now as they attempt to protect King Charles of England (Bill Paterson) (077358).
- 4.05 London Weekend: Tonight (R) (073558), 4.15 ITV News: Weather (R) (080045).
- 4.30 F1: Brazilian Grand Prix Qualifying Live. Jim Rosenthal introduces the coverage of the qualifying session for the Brazilian Grand Prix from the interlaced circuit in Sao Paulo (S) (073558).
- 6.15 Would I Lie to You? In the last of these three shows, prankster DJ Steve Nouri pulls a fast one on more studio audience stooges (S) (073558).
- 7.00 Blind Date (S) (073558).
- 7.30 News and Sport: Weather (R) (080316).
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